



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-22-69  
Meeting 22-15  
June 8, 2022

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Consideration of the Multi-use Through Trail Alignment at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Review and approve the recommended revised alignment of the Multi-Use Through Trail at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve and the designation of an additional hiking/equestrian trail. Consider a phased opening of the Multi-Use Through Trail.

### SUMMARY

In January 2017, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) approved the [Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan](#) (Preserve Plan) and certified the Environmental Impact Report ([R-17-15](#)). The Preserve Plan includes a multi-use through trail alignment that would provide a connection from the Lexington Basin through the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Bear Creek Preserve) to the Skyline/Summit area. The conceptual multi-use trail alignment included in the Board-approved Preserve Plan largely fronts the east side of Bear Creek Road from its starting point at Highway 17 before it jogs further into the preserve to then arrive at the former Alma College area where the alignment crosses the public paved roadway to continue on wide trails west of Bear Creek Road. As a result of field investigations conducted over the past several years, the northeast segment of the conceptual multi-use alignment as shown in Figure 3-1 from the Preserve Plan (Attachment 1) was deemed infeasible due to geological, topographic, and waterway issues. In April 2020, staff provided an informational memorandum (FYI memo) to the Board that discussed the need to modify the alignment, which is specifically allowed in the Preserve Plan. The FYI memo identified a revised alignment (Attachment 2) for the multi-use trail that continues to meet the multi-use trail guidelines discussed in the Preserve Plan. The General Manager recommends reviewing and approving the revised multi-use trail alignment and the designation of an additional hiking/equestrian trail that will provide an equestrian and hiking bypass for a long segment of the multi-use trail.

### DISCUSSION

In January 2017, the Board approved the Preserve Plan and certified the Environmental Impact Report. The Preserve Plan identified a phased implementation of the trail network. Phase I included the construction of the Bear Creek Redwoods Parking Lot and trails on the west side of the preserve, including related culvert and bridge improvements. After the Phase I improvements were completed, Bear Creek Preserve was open to the public in June of 2019. Phase II projects include the construction of new trails, improvements to existing roads and trails, and new stream

crossings. The Phase II trail network includes a significant segment of the proposed multi-use trail alignment. Once the Phase II trails are completed, the east side of the preserve is planned to be opened to public access (estimated in early 2024).

In Fall 2018, District staff and field crew investigated the conceptual multi-use through trail alignment shown in the Preserve Plan and identified several areas of concern regarding the constructability of a potential new segment of trail that crossed through steep and heavily constrained topography. Additionally, staff identified concerns regarding ongoing maintenance of this route. In May 2019, the District retained Questa Engineering, along with their subconsultants Sequoia Ecological and Basin Research, to design, engineer, and permit the Phase II trail network project, including the lower segment of the multi-use through trail. Questa evaluated the conceptual alignment of the multi-use through trail and found that significant segments (shown in red on Attachment 2) of the proposed trail alignment were highly problematic, costly, and would result in significant impacts to the environment due to required slope stabilization efforts, numerous tree removals, construction of two long span bridges, and other issues.

Questa proposed two alternative alignments for the multi-use trail in consultation with District staff. Alignment 1 follows a similar route as proposed in the Preserve Plan and would require new trail construction. Alignment 2 follows existing routes where trail improvements are already planned as part of the larger Phase II trail network. Due to various factors discussed below, Alignment 2 is identified as the recommended revised multi-use trail alignment.

#### Conformance with the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan

The Preserve Plan recognized that the multi-use trail alignment was subject to change during the design process as stated below:

*The northeastern segment of the multi-use trail, beginning at the intersection of Bear Creek Road and the HWY 17 interchange, will be designed and constructed to avoid established equestrian trails, neighboring properties, unstable geologic features, and other topographic constraints to the greatest extent possible. The conceptual alignment shown on Figure 3-1 is therefore subject to change during the design and engineering process (Preserve Plan 03-12).*

Per the Preserve Plan, the multi-use trail shall incorporate the following design guidelines:

- Width and alignment should allow for safe and adequate visibility and safety for all users to the maximum extent possible, including horses and novice equestrians, and be accessible to patrol vehicles;
- Alignment minimizes intersections with other trails, particularly those in the immediate vicinity of the Stables or otherwise frequently used by equestrians; and
- Grade should be gentle (generally less than 10%) where possible to enable efficient drainage, or drainage improvements should be made to minimize erosion and allow year-round use.

#### *Alignment 1 – Not Preferred*

This alignment (shown in yellow on Attachment 2) was evaluated because it retains as much of the conceptual alignment as possible, while avoiding highly problematic sections shown in red. Although this alignment is technically feasible, cost estimates (as of 2019) suggest that construction of this new 2,500-foot long, 10 to 12-foot wide multi-use trail would cost approximately \$1.6 million more as compared to Alignment 2. Additionally, this alignment

would require higher long-term operational and maintenance costs due to steep slopes and unstable underlying geology. Also of concern, the alignment would need to follow the Bear Creek Stables driveway for approximately 200 linear feet to avoid an infeasible crossing over a tributary to Briggs Creek. Unfortunately, this alignment would result in similar environmental impacts to the original conceptual alignment. It would require significant slope stabilization to prevent erosion, an overly steep descent with a bridge crossing within sensitive creek habitat along Briggs Creek, and numerous tree removals. Finally, this alignment would require the use of existing trail routes frequently used by equestrians associated with Bear Creek Stables. Due to these factors, this alignment was rejected in favor of Alignment 2.

#### *Alignment 2 – Recommended Alignment*

The recommended alignment (shown in green on Attachment 2) utilizes existing wide road and trail routes that range from eight to 12 feet wide. This route significantly reduces construction costs and impacts to sensitive riparian habitat by eliminating bridge crossings and reduces environmental impacts overall by utilizing existing roads and trails that will already be improved as part of the Phase II Trails scope (i.e. no new trail construction/new loss of vegetation or trees/compaction of soils/trail and recreation disturbance/etc). Operational and maintenance requirements are minimized since existing roads and trail routes will be used. Based on more recent concerns raised about potential bicycle and horse conflicts by numerous boarders, staff identified additional trail improvements to enhance line-of-sight, along with improved mowing and brushing regimes that would begin when the Phase II trail network opens to the public. This alignment meets the design guidelines in the Preserve Plan by avoiding the trails in the immediate vicinity of the stables, incorporates gentle grades and provides adequate trail width. This recommended alignment was first presented in a Board FYI on April 2020 and, with final refinements, is being presented to the Board as part of this Agenda Item for final approval.

#### Communication with Friends of Bear Creek Stables

The District holds regular meetings with the Friends of Bear Creek Stables (Friends) and the stables operator. These meetings serve to improve communication and coordination between the District, the Friends group, and the stables operator. Recently, the Friends group expressed their strong preference towards the original conceptual multiuse trail alignment that is shown in the Preserve Plan as opposed to the recommended revised alignment that is the subject of this Agenda Item.

The primary concern identified by the Friends was the safety of having bicycles and horses on the same trail. While there was also some overlap of equestrian use and bicycle use in the Preserve Plan conceptual alignment, they expressed that the current alignment would not allow equestrians to avoid trails where bicycles are allowed as much as the previous alignment. Staff provided a tour to the Friends group in June 2021 to review the newly identified alignment, discuss operational strategies, such as brushing to open sight-lines, and receive additional feedback. During the winter 2022 quarterly meeting, the Friends inquired about Board review of the multiuse trail alignment (the subject of this Agenda Item) as an opportunity for them to provide feedback directly to the Board.

#### Additional Trail and Operational Enhancements to Avoid Potential Trail Conflicts

Due to the concerns expressed by the Friends group, staff investigated opportunities to provide additional separation of the multi-use trail from equestrian accessible trails. Through these investigations, staff has identified an additional equestrian/hiking trail that will allow equestrians

to avoid a long stretch of the multi-use trail as a further measure to minimize potential visitor conflicts (Attachment 3). An extension of the Briggs Creek Trail using a section of a legacy road is a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive option. This additional hiking/equestrian trail is included in the General Manager's recommendation. Additionally, strategies such as expanded trail brushing to further open sight-lines, informational and regulatory signage, and proper grading and shaping of the trail will provide for visitor safety. Fremont Older Open Space Preserve is an example where active multiuse trails are well used by bicyclists and by the adjacent Garrod Stables equestrians, including novice riders. This preserve has experienced no reports of equestrian accidents that involved a cyclist over the last 10 years.

Finally, once a multi-use alignment is opened to bicycles, District Rangers will monitor trail use and assess conditions over a one to two-year time frame. The results would be evaluated and discussed with the Friends group to determine whether any additional trail or operational enhancements are warranted to further enhance safety and reduce potential conflicts. Given District experience at other preserves, no additional changes are anticipated at this time, however, this check-in would provide the opportunity to assess any potential changes.

#### Opening the trail to multi-use

The proposed multi-use trail serves to provide a connection from the Lexington Basin through the Preserve to the Skyline/Summit area. A significant component of completing this multi-use connection is the need to safely connect the trail at the north-east corner of the preserve near the Highway 17/Bear Creek Road interchange (lower end) and at the southwest area of the preserve with State-route 35 (upper end). In the Preserve Plan, under Table 4-1 Implementation Actions, the following two implementation actions are described to provide trailheads for *Public Use and Facilities Objective 1.4: Designate a multi-use through trail*.

*1.4a – Work with partner agencies to formalize a trail connection to Lexington Reservoir County Park. Partner with Santa Clara County and Caltrans to provide a safe pedestrian crossing (crosswalk and/or additional stop sign) of highway off- ramp and Bear Creek Road. Obtain Caltrans encroachment permit to improve safety and security (fencing, signage) and formalize trail entry at northeast corner of Preserve*

*1.4b – Work with partner agencies to formalize a trail connection from the southwest corner of the Preserve to SR35. As necessary, install stop sign or other traffic control measures to ensure safe ingress/egress for trail users onto HWY 35 at the intersection with Bear Creek Road.*

The District retained W-Trans to prepare a Multi-Use Trail Crossing Study to determine opportunities and alternatives for implementation action 1.4b. The study identified substantial challenges to providing a safe connection at Bear Creek/Summit Road. As a result of these findings, the north-east trail connection at the Highway 17/Bear Creek Road was prioritized, and the south-west connection was deferred until a later date.

Due to these challenges, the Board may consider phasing the opening of the multi-use trail to bicycles, starting first with the lower segment that extends from the north-east corner of the preserve and connects to the existing Bear Creek Preserve parking lot (see informational memorandum "Phase II Trail improvements North-East Trailhead Equestrian Access"). Opening this segment of trail to multi-use would be concurrent with the public opening of the east side of the preserve once improvements are completed. This would allow visitors to connect from the



Lexington Basin to the parking area to facilitate multimodal access to the preserve. In particular, it would provide bicycle access from the Los Gatos Creek Trail via a short section of Alma Bridge Road, allowing cyclists in nearby communities to ride to the preserve parking lot instead of driving. A future project would complete additional investigations, design, and construction of the southwest trail connection at Bear Creek/Summit Road to complete the upper segment of the multi-use trail. Once the upper trailhead and a short section of connecting trail is completed, the remainder of the multiuse trail from the parking lot to Bear Creek/Summit Road intersection would be opened. Consistent with the Board's high interest in promoting multimodal options, the General Manager recommends this phased opening approach. Alternatively, the Board could defer the opening the entire multi-use trail to bicycles until the upper trailhead at Bear Creek/Summit Road is completed (likely after 2026).

## FISCAL IMPACT

The FY22 amended budget includes \$359,250 for the Phase II Trail Improvements, Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve project (MAA21-011). A total of \$2,471,121 in grant funding from the California National Resource Agency has been approved as part of the approved MAA project. There are sufficient funds in the project budget to cover the recommended action and expenditures. Funds to cover FY23 and FY24 will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

MAA21-011 Phase II Trail Improvements, BCR	Prior Year Actuals	FY22 Amended	FY23 Projected	FY24 Projected	TOTAL
District Funded (Fund 30):	\$714,273	\$359,250		(\$151,095)	\$922,428
District Funded (Fund 40):	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000
Grant Amount:	\$0	\$0	\$1,411,507	\$1,059,614	\$2,471,121
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$714,273</b>	<b>\$359,250</b>	<b>\$1,411,507</b>	<b>\$1,108,519</b>	<b>\$3,593,549</b>
Spent-to-Date (as of 05/12/22):	(\$714,273)	(\$110,870)	\$0	\$0	(\$825,143)
Encumbrances:	\$0	(\$129,216)	\$0	\$0	(\$129,216)
Muti-use Trail/Briggs Creek Trail Extension:	\$0	\$0	(\$10,000)	\$0	(\$10,000)
<b>Budget Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$119,164</b>	<b>\$1,401,507</b>	<b>\$1,108,519</b>	<b>\$2,629,190</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 21 Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA21 Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$17,478,000</b>
Grant Income (through FY25):	7,643,388
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$25,121,388</b>
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 05/12/22):	(13,163,587)
Encumbrances:	(2,255,530)
Remaining FY22 Project Budgets:	(223,968)
Future MAA21 project costs (projected through FY25):	(9,460,251)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$25,103,337)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$18,051</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 21 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA21 Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$17,478,000</b>
Grant Income (through FY25):	\$7,643,388
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$25,121,388</b>
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
MAA21-001 - Moody Gulch - Land Conserv, Fence & Gate Improvements	(\$847)
MAA21-002 - Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan	\$0
MAA21-003 - Bear Creek Redwoods Stables Water System	\$0
MAA21-004 - Bear Creek Stables Project	(\$6,670,482)
MAA21-005 - Bear Creek Redwoods Public Access	(\$5,548,003)
MAA21-006 - Bear Creek Redwoods - Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehab	(\$6,067,687)
MAA21-007 - Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan: Invasive Weed Treatment and R	(\$1,452,035)
MAA21-008 - Bear Creek Redwoods - Ponds Restoration and Water Rights	(\$681,517)
MAA21-009 - Bear Creek Redwoods - Webb Creek Bridge	(\$487,492)
MAA21-010 - Bear Creek Redwoods Landfill Characterization and Remediation	(\$510,810)
MAA21-011 - Phase II Trail Improvements, Bear Creek Redwoods OSP	(\$3,593,549)
MAA21-012 - Bear Creek Redwood Tree Restoration	(\$90,915)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$25,103,337)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$18,051</b>

## BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **January 25, 2017:** The Board approved and certified the Environmental Impact Report. ([R-17-15](#))
- **April 6, 2020:** The Board received an FYI memo regarding the Multi-use Trail Alignment at Bear Creek Redwoods. ([FYI](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Additional notice was provided to Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve and Trails Interested Parties.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

Potential environmental impacts of the Bear Creek Redwoods Phase II Trails and associated improvements were analyzed in the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan and Environmental Impact Report, which was certified by the Board on January 25, 2017.

## NEXT STEPS

If approved, the General Manager will direct staff to implement the multi-use trail and include the extension of the Briggs Creek Trail to provide an additional equestrian/hiking trail that bypasses a significant segment of the multi-use trail. Staff will continue with improvements necessary to open the Phase II Trails network as scheduled in the Preserve Plan.

Attachment(s)

1. Public Access Plan from the Preserve Plan – Figure 3-1
2. Multi-use Trail Alignment Alternatives
3. Opportunity to minimize overlap

Responsible Department Head:

Brandon Stewart, Land and Facilities Department Manager

Prepared by / Contact person:

Bryan Apple, Capital Projects Field Manager

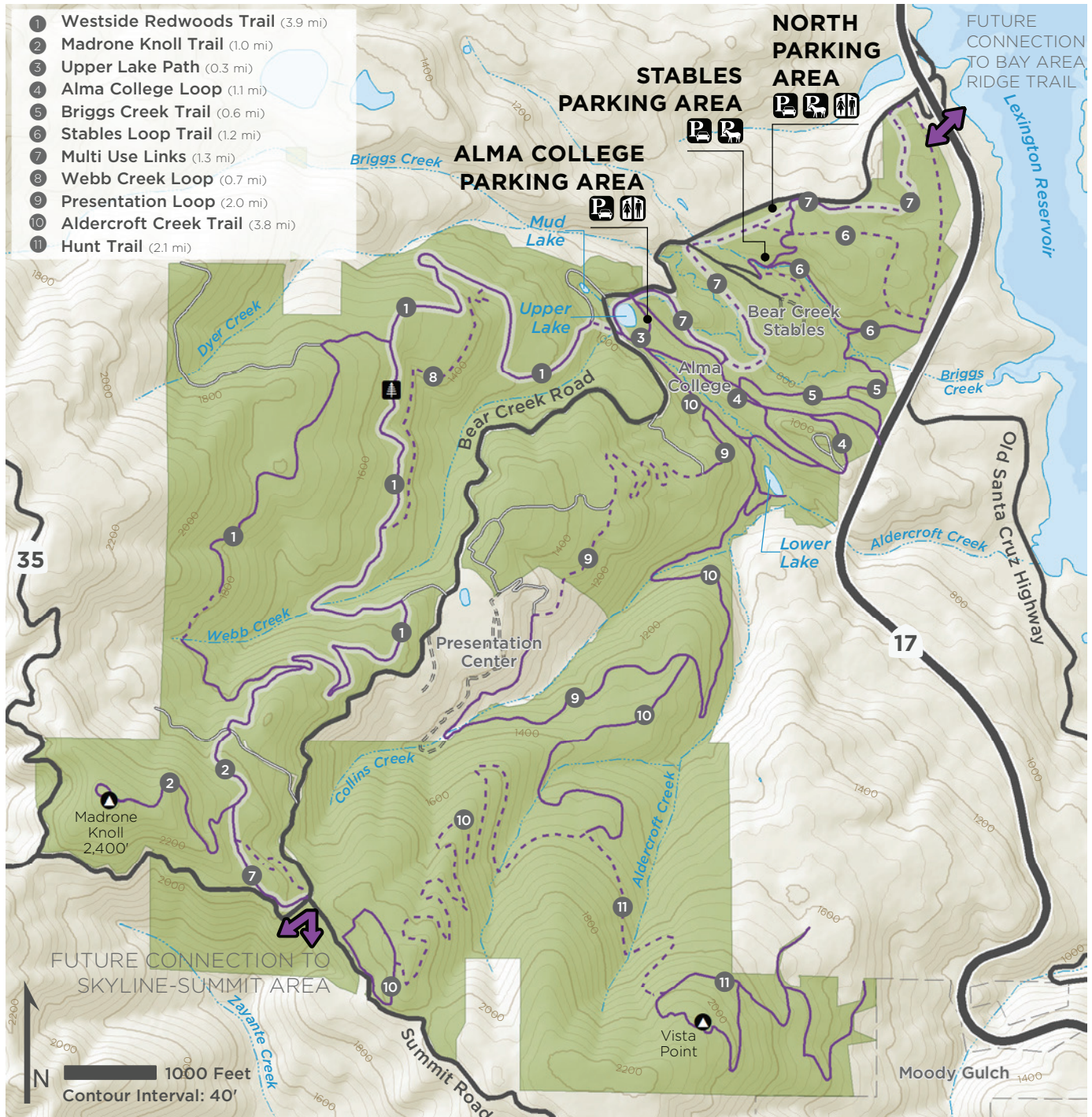


FIGURE 3-1 Public Access Plan

## LEGEND

## ROADS

- Highway
- Major
- Public
- Private
- Patrol Use Only

## TRAILS

- Improve Existing Road/Trail for Increased Use
- Construct New Trail
- Multi-use

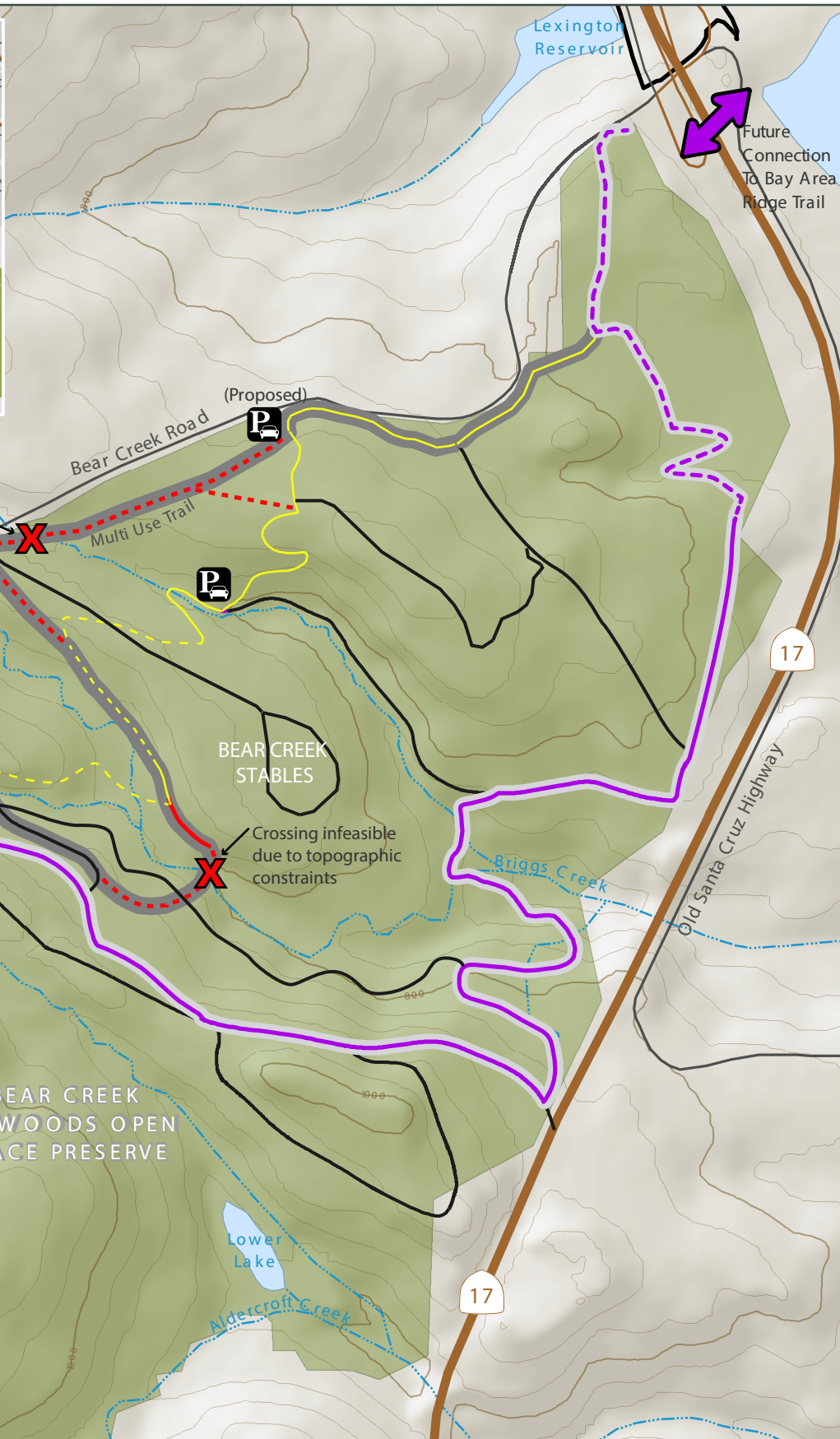
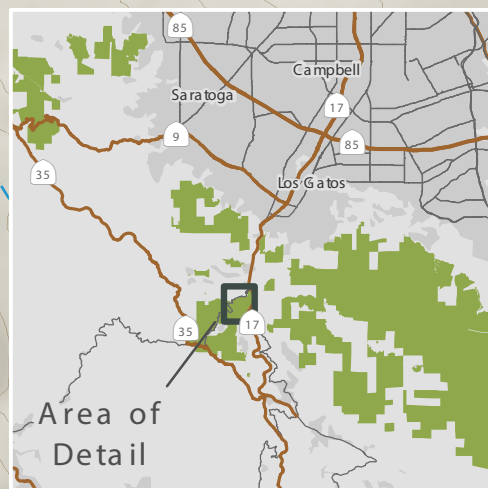
## FEATURES

- Point of Interest
- Old Growth Redwoods
- Regional Connection



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## ATTACHMENT 2: Bear Creek Redwoods Phase II Public Access

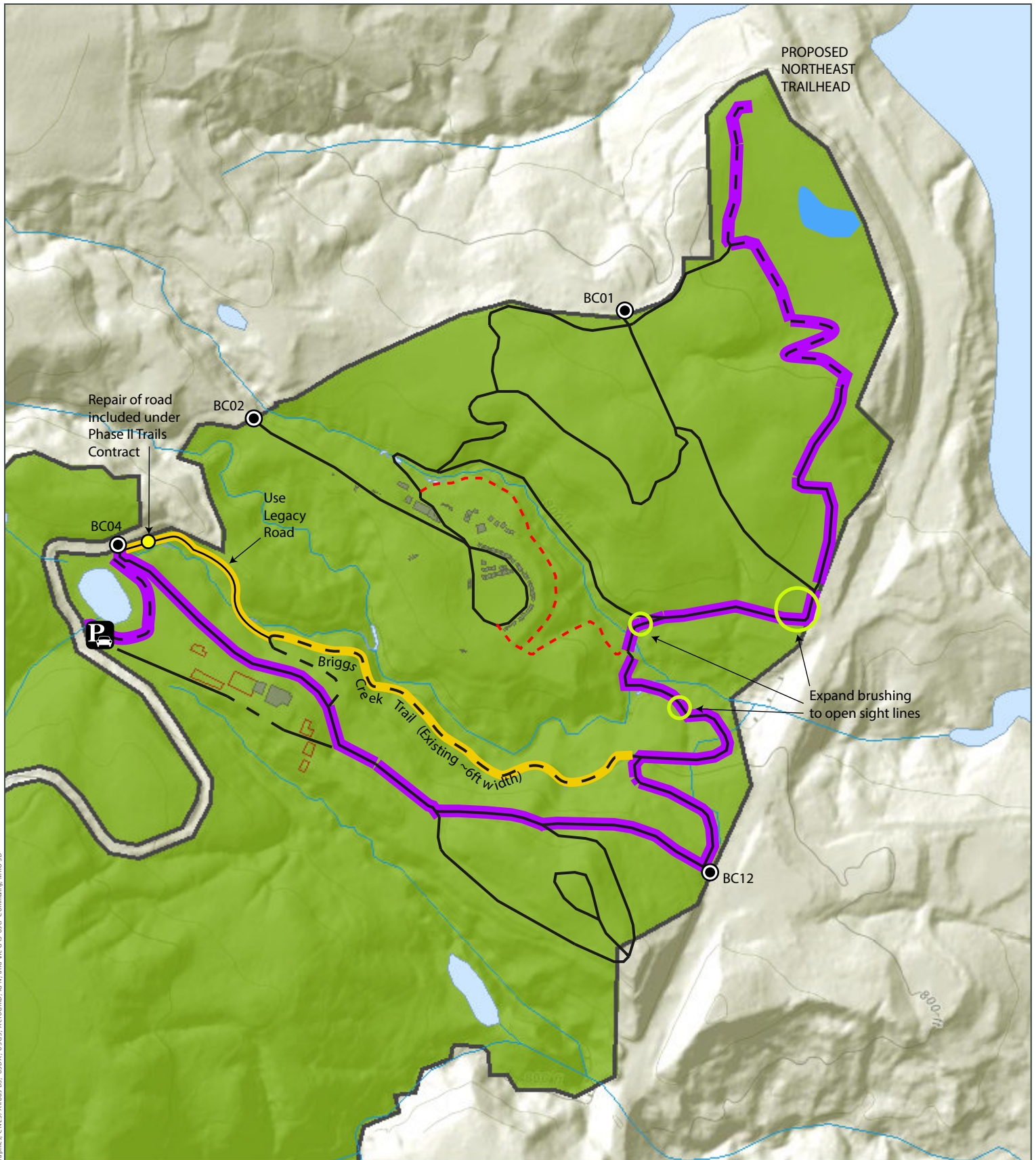
- |  |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
|  | Existing Road/Trail to be Improved      |  | Preferred Multi-Use Trail Alignment |
|  | Proposed New Trail                      |  | Alternative - Multi-Use Trail       |
|  | Preserve Plan Multi-use Trail Alignment |  | Infeasible Multi-Use Trail Segment  |

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(MRO SD)  
May 2022



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.





### Attachment 3 - Bear Creek Redwoods Phase II Access - Briggs Creek Trail Extension

- Multi-Use Trail
- Potential Equestrian Bypass
- - - Road/Trail Removed from Phase II Plan
- - - 6-Foot Wide Trail
- Seasonal Patrol Access Route
- Delineated Wetland

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2/24/2021



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