



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: June 22, 2022

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Matt Anderson, Chief Ranger

SUBJECT: Annual Afterhours Preserve Closures for 4<sup>th</sup> of July

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Prior to the pandemic, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) had historically allowed afterhours access for fireworks viewing in specific sites at the following preserves:

- Russian Ridge
- Windy Hill
- Rancho San Antonio
- Fremont Older
- St Joseph's Hill

This practice was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 and wildland fire concerns.

Although COVID-related restrictions on outdoor gatherings and activities have been lifted, the threat of major wildfires in rural communities and open spaces continues giving ongoing drought conditions, increased development within the wildland-urban interface, and a long history of fire suppression that has led to high levels of fuels build up within natural landscapes.

The danger of firework ignitions is very real. Personal fireworks, including “safe and sane”, are illegal in most Santa Clara and San Mateo County cities and in the unincorporated areas of both counties. Each year, people are drawn to the Skyline Area to park and view public displays in the valley below. It is the District’s experience that many also bring with them illegal fireworks and set them off along roadside shoulders or within parking areas.

For these reasons starting this year, unless directed to bring this item to the Board in open session, the General Manager will direct staff to cease the past practice of allowing afterhours preserve access via a general permit on July 4<sup>th</sup> for fireworks viewing. Per [District Ordinance](#) under Chapter VIII – District Lands Operations, Section 805 - Closures, the General Manager is authorized to issue a temporary or regular closure of District preserves “to ensure safety and health of persons, to protect natural resources”, and to “provide for security, safeguarding, and preservation of District Lands”. Rangers would work later shifts on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July to enforce the annual closures and participate in a multi-agency safety watch coordinated by the City of Palo Alto Office of Emergency Services (OES).

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