



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-22-77  
Meeting 22-16  
June 22, 2022

**AGENDA ITEM 5**

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Informational Report on the Outcomes of Six Years of Native Planting and Interpretive Work at Cooley Landing Park and Ravenswood Open Space Preserve

**GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION** *den*

Receive an informational report on the six years of Measure AA-funded native planting and interpretive efforts completed by Grassroots Ecology related to the Cooley Landing Park project located adjacent to and within Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. No Board action required.

**SUMMARY**

On September 28, 2016 and July 24, 2019 (R-16-116, R-19-106) respectively, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) Board of Directors (Board) approved a contract and an amendment with Grassroots Ecology for native planting and interpretive work over two three-year periods at Cooley Landing Park (Cooley Landing). This Measure AA-funded work was associated with the Cooley Landing project led by the City of East Palo Alto and focused on enhancing habitat, providing opportunities for interpretation, expanding visitor and volunteer diversity, and encouraging stewardship within the community. Grassroots Ecology's work implemented a conceptual planting scheme that was originally developed as part of the overall vision for Cooley Landing, and the work under this agreement and amendment is now concluded. This presentation will provide an overview of what has been accomplished over the six years.

**BACKGROUND**

In February 2010, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) authorized a Partnership Agreement with the City of East Palo Alto (City) for the construction and operation of improvements in the Cooley Landing Area of Ravenswood Open Space Preserve (Preserve) with the goal of developing the site into a city park (R-10-29). Cooley Landing Park includes portions of the Preserve that extend along the Cooley Landing peninsula (Attachment 1). The City completed construction of the park in five phases. The District contributed \$1,256,300 in Measure AA funding towards construction of the park, including the planting installed by Grassroots Ecology.

Grassroots Ecology is a local environmental nonprofit that brings native planting back to open spaces and neighborhoods, stewards creeks and watersheds, and provides hands-on nature education. They design their programs to benefit the diverse natural habitats and human communities that make up Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. Under this Measure AA-funded

contract, Grassroots Ecology organized community workdays to implement native planting and simultaneously engaged and educated youth and community members about bayland ecology.

## DISCUSSION

The end of Fiscal Year 2021-22 marks the end of Grassroots Ecology's six years of Measure-AA funded efforts related to the Cooley Landing project. At the June 22, 2022 Board meeting, Grassroots Ecology will present a final summary of work completed, including activities in 2020 and 2021, which faced the uncertainty and unanticipated challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In six years, and combined with other grant funding, Grassroots held 431 (including over 200 Midpen-funded) work events and activities with over 5,000 students, interns, and volunteers from the community and region. They installed over 3,710 native plants (2,274 Midpen-funded) around the Cooley Landing Education Center, in the bioswale along the drive from Bay Road, and at key focal points within the site. They were also instrumental in working with Bay Area artist and environmental activist Linda Gass to convert a temporary land art installation into a more permanent interpretive feature, *The Living Shoreline*, using native plants to loosely depict the original shoreline of the bay before the County landfill site that previously existed on the site filled the area and created the form of the peninsula that now exists today.

In addition, Grassroots Ecology helped advance diversity, equity and inclusion goals. Grassroots Ecology staff have made a consistent effort to be present in the community by tabling at local schools, the East Palo Alto Farmer's Market, and at events like the District's 50th Anniversary Bayside Family Festival. These efforts have sparked connections that led to joint workdays with new partners, naturalist walks, and educational events with partners like Fresh Approach, East Palo Alto Tennis & Tutoring, Tide Academy, and other community organizations. This past year, Grassroots Ecology also launched a paid internship program for college students and early-career environmental professionals; two of the interns worked at Cooley Landing. Another target that Grassroots Ecology has for programming includes providing naturalist events and community events in Spanish. Spanish-led walks have included the King Tides Walk, Fresh Approach Naturalist Walk, and the East Palo Alto Charter School Baylands Walk.

Over the past six years, Grassroots Ecology also successfully leveraged the Measure AA funds to obtain over \$414,000 in grant funding. The additional funding has allowed them to expand on the work covered by the District contract with community outreach and programming such as field-based education for students, interpretive walks, trash cleanups, and additional volunteer workdays. Some of the funders include the Packard Foundation, Bohannon Foundation, Johnson Foundation, Laurel Foundation, Coastal Conservancy, San Mateo County Office of Sustainability, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program, and City of East Palo Alto, as well as individual donations to Grassroots Ecology.

As the Measure AA-funded work concludes, at the June 22, 2022 regular Board meeting, the Board will consider the approval of a new partnership agreement with Grassroots Ecology to pursue a new phase of community engagement and landscape maintenance at Cooley Landing.

## FISCAL IMPACT

None.

**BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

Grassroots Ecology's contract and amendment related to the Cooley Landing project were presented at the following public meetings:

- [September 28, 2016 Board meeting](#)
- [July 24, 2019 Board meeting](#)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

**NEXT STEPS**

The Board will consider approval of a new partnership agreement with Grassroots Ecology at the June 22 regular Board meeting. If approved, Grassroots Ecology will accomplish a new phase of community engagement and landscape maintenance at Cooley Landing for the next four years.

**Attachment**

1. Cooley Landing area map

Responsible Department Head:  
Jane Mark, Planning Department

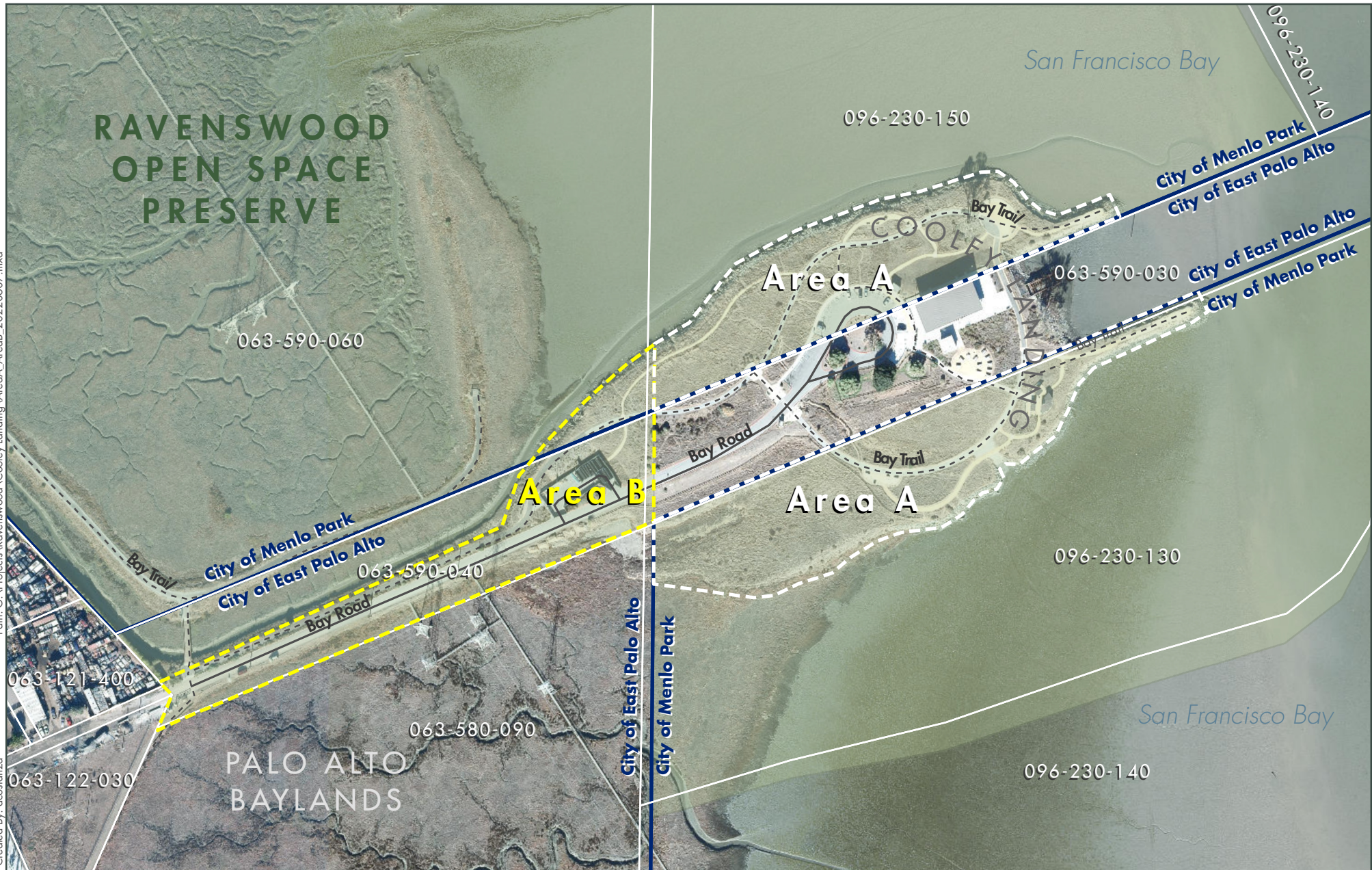
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Graphics prepared by:  
Anna Costanza, GIS Technician, Information Systems & Technology Department



Path: G:\Projects\Ravenswood\Cooley Landing\AreaA\_AreaB\_20220607.mxd  
Created By: acostanza



### Attachment 1: Cooley Landing Area, Ravenswood Open Space Preserve

- Midpen preserve
- Paved Road
- Trail

- County parcel boundary
- City boundary
- Area B
- Area A

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
6/7/2022



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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.