



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: October 12, 2022

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Meredith Manning, Resource Management Specialist III *MM*

SUBJECT: Report to Regional Water Board regarding Pescadero Creek Sediment TMDL

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## SUMMARY

In December 2018, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) adopted a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for sediment in the Pescadero-Butano watershed (Map Attachment 1). The TMDL was adopted to decrease sedimentation that has impaired habitat for steelhead and coho salmon and contributes to flooding in the town of Pescadero. The TMDL went into effect in May 2019. To comply with the TMDL, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District), as one of many property owners within the watershed, inventoried road networks in Skyline Ridge and Long Ridge Open Space Preserves (OSPs) and submitted an assessment report in September 2022 to the Water Board. Other landowners throughout the watershed are also required to conduct similar activities. Currently within the watershed, the District owns approximately 3,800 acres of land in fee, holds another 400 acres under easement (Map Attachment 1), and may potentially manage additional lands (a 1,500-acre portion of the Cloverdale property lies within this watershed).

Based on findings from the assessment report, relative sediment contributions from District lands are low. Even estimated potential future inputs would remain below the target performance measures by the Water Board. The report submitted to the Water Board describes the District's proposed actions in response to required TMDL implementation measures for sediment discharges associated with parks and open space lands. The Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (FY23) budget and action plan includes \$155,000 for the Pescadero Watershed Sediment Reduction Implementation project to assess treatment options in the Pescadero-Butano watershed.

## BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

In December 2018, the Water Board adopted a TMDL for sediment in the Pescadero-Butano watershed due to increased sedimentation that has impaired habitat for steelhead and coho salmon and contributes to flooding in the town of Pescadero. The TMDL establishes regulations requiring a sediment assessment of properties within the watershed and different levels of mitigation depending on the size of each property and the type of land use. These regulations are to be phased in over time and apply to Skyline Ridge and Long Ridge OSPs (in the upper Pescadero-Butano watershed near Skyline Boulevard/HWY 35) as well as any future potential acquisitions (e.g., Cloverdale Coastal Ranch near the coast) that lie within the watershed. The Board received an [FYI \(Meeting 19-24, minutes\)](#) in

September 2019 regarding the Pescadero-Butano watershed TMDL and a second anticipated TMDL that is being developed for San Gregorio Creek.

Balance Hydrologics was hired to develop a sediment source survey to identify the contribution of sediment to Pescadero Creek from District lands. This survey, completed in May 2022, reviewed and updated a previous road and trail sediment inventory (PWA, 2005) and evaluated new potential sediment sources on recently acquired land in the watershed. Substantial sediment control work has been proactively performed by the District since the 2005 inventory, including ongoing routine maintenance projects and a large restoration project in 2011 at Big Dipper Ranch in Skyline Ridge OSP ([R-11-64](#), minutes) ([R-11-64](#)). A total of 132 sites were evaluated on 26 miles of roads and trails with the conclusion that only 2,100 cubic yards of sediment have a high or moderate potential to fail in a catastrophic flooding event (a relatively low volume compared to the total sediment delivered to Pescadero Creek annually).

The submitted report proposes the development of a prioritized implementation plan and schedule for repair and/or replacement of high priority sites to reduce road-related erosion and protect the aquatic environment. The report describes the District's proposed plan and 20-year schedule for addressing sites with the highest potential for sediment delivery, using techniques that are consistent with District standards. The 20-year schedule: a) matches the TMDL's target date for achieving its sediment reduction goals, b) allows time to consult with neighbors having road agreements with the District, and c) allows time for District internal discussions on future potential trail configurations. A key point to note is that this proposed effort is orders of magnitude smaller in scale than the Watershed Protection Program (WPP) at El Corte de Madera (ECdM) Creek OSP. Most of the proposed actions are covered in the District's Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program (OSMRP) for which an ISMND has been adopted ([R-21-126](#), minutes), including road-to-trail conversions if they fall within annual programmatic limits; other actions may require separate permitting and CEQA subject to Board approval.

More specifically, the September 2022 assessment report that was submitted to the Water Board includes the following key points:

- 1) The District's sediment contribution from road-stream crossings is low compared to the target limits of the TMDL;
- 2) Compared to the total amount of sediment transported to streams annually in the full watershed, even the *potential* sediment delivered from District lands by catastrophic flooding would remain below the target limits of the TMDL;
- 3) Treatment of the sites with the highest sediment loads is consistent with the goals of the Water Board and with the District's practices and mission;
- 4) Most sites appear eligible for programmatic (streamlined) permitting through the OSMRP;
- 5) Many sites identified in the previous 2005 inventory have been proactively treated;
- 6) The District owns parcels that are part of roughly nine road agreements where the District may not have the legal authority to address sedimentation issues without consultation and consent from private parties in the road agreements; and
- 7) Additional assessments will determine the future configuration and alignment of trails and patrol roads (e.g., road-to-trail conversions as a tool for sediment reduction).

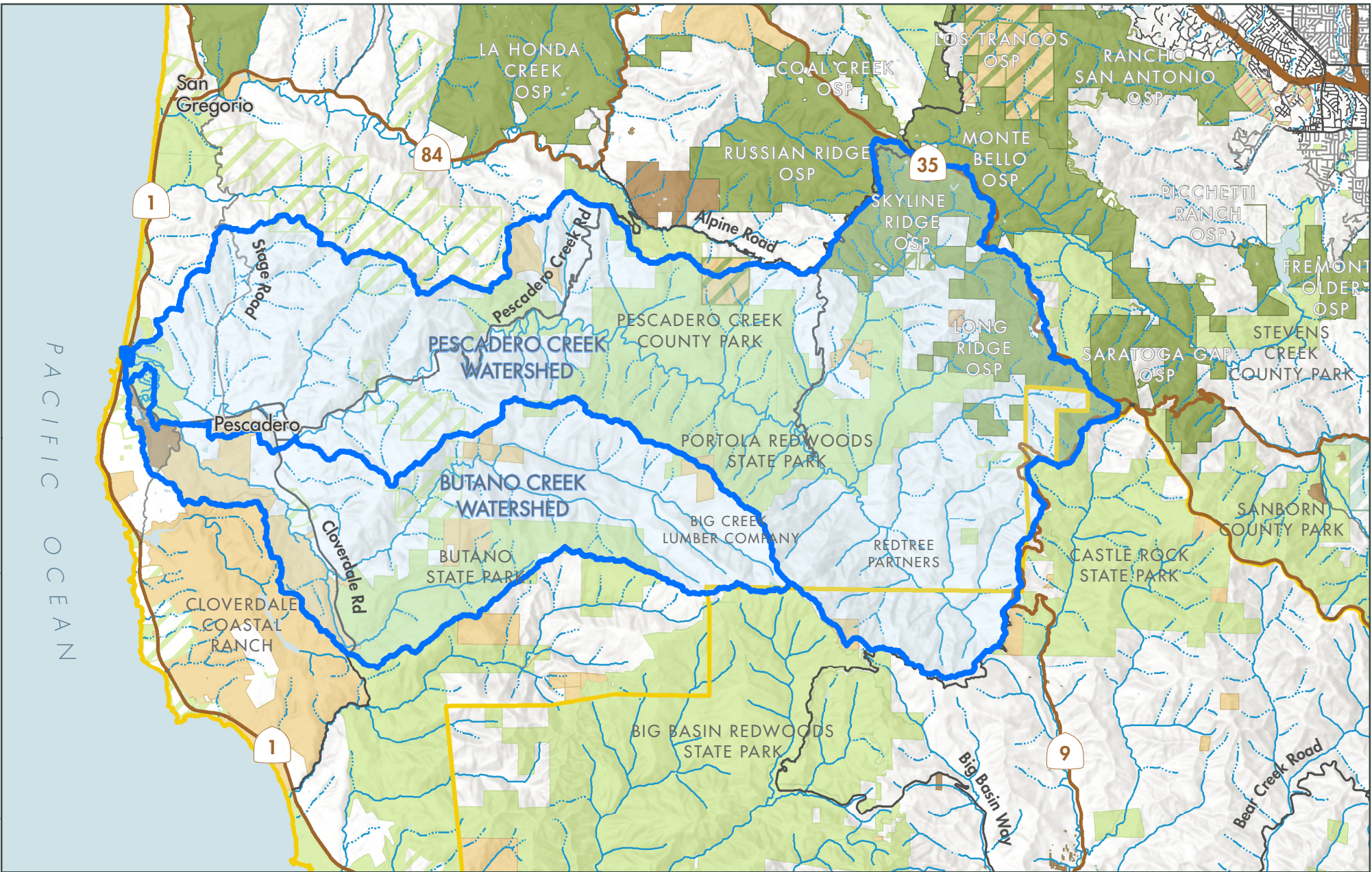
## **NEXT STEPS**

Balance Hydrologics is also performing a sediment inventory on District lands in the San Gregorio Creek Watershed for a Water Quality Improvement Plan adopted in 2021 by the Water Board for that watershed. New sediment reduction projects are likely for preserves within that watershed (ECdM Creek, Tunitas Creek, La Honda Creek, and Russian Ridge OSPs). The robust WPP at ECdM already addressed many sedimentation issues in that preserve with a few remaining. Active engagement with partners, including the Water Board, will be ongoing throughout this effort.









Attachment 1: Pescadero-Butano Watershed Map

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### Pescadero-Butano Watershed TMDL Map

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|  Midpen preserves      |  Watershed           |  District boundary                                |
|  Other protected lands |  Land trust          |  Non Midpen conservation or agricultural easement |
|  Private property      |  Other public agency |  |

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(MROSD)  
September 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.