



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: April 26, 2023
MEMO TO: Board of Directors
THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *deur*
FROM: Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager
SUBJECT: Measure AA and Vision Plan Trail Update

Given numerous recent public and Board comments on the topic of trails, this memorandum serves to update the Board of Directors (Board) on the trail progress made by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) under the 2014 voter-approved Measure AA (MAA) General Obligation Bond. This memo also helps to explain the trail goals established under MAA and how these overlap (though not completely) with the Board-adopted Vision Plan trail goals. The work completed to date on furthering the trail goals described in the 25 MAA Portfolios and as part of the Vision Plan Priority Actions are continuously tracked by staff to measure District progress and achievements over time.

Measure AA (MAA)-Funded Trails

The MAA ballot language presented before the voters in 2014 includes broad language about the funding measure's intent to improve access to hiking and biking opportunities. The exact ballot language is presented below with text underlined to highlight the relevant language:

To improve access to hiking and biking opportunities, protect and preserve redwood forests, natural open spaces, the scenic beauty of our region and coastline, critical wildlife habitat, restore creeks to protect water quality, and reduce forest fire risk; shall Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District be authorized to issue up to \$300 million in bonds, at a tax rate not to exceed \$3.18 per \$100,000 of assessed value of property owned, with expenditures verified by an independent citizen oversight committee?

The MAA Expenditure Plan, which is Exhibit A to the official ballot ordinance, provides more specificity on the trail projects proposed and funded per each portfolio. Some examples of this language and how these trail goals are described is provided below (underlined text highlights relevant language). Please refer to Attachment 1 for the full Expenditure Plan:

South Bay Foothills: Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Wildlife Corridor

Protect wildlife corridor along Highway 9. Connect trail to Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Skyline-to-Sea Trail.

Sierra Azul: Mt. Umunhum Public Access and Interpretation Projects

Open Mt. Umunhum for multi-use public access to summit via road and trail. Open Bay Area Ridge Trail and nearby trail connections. Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor.

Also attached, is the MAA Factsheet brochure that was prepared and distributed by the District as an informational public document to explain the purpose and intent of the funding measure (Attachment 2).

MAA-Funded Trail Progress to Date

Annually, the [MAA Bond Accountability Report](#) measures MAA progress against each of the elements listed in the 25 MAA Portfolios as described under the Expenditure Plan by using moon diagrams. These moon diagrams visually report the estimated level of completion by percentage as either 0% (empty moon), 25% (quarter moon), 50% (half-moon), 75% (three-quarter moon), or 100% complete (full moon).

Of the 25 MAA Portfolios, 24 of them include a trail component(s). Since 2014, the District has completed or supported the opening of approximately 31.4 new miles of publicly accessible trail using MAA funding. This represents a 14% increase in total trail mileage, with the District currently operating 253.3 miles as part of its trail system.

Notably, as of today, the trail components of the following four portfolios are deemed fully complete:

- Portfolio 2: Ravenswood Bay Trail connection at Ravenswood Preserve;
- Portfolio 9: Mindego Hill Trail at Russian Ridge Preserve;
- Portfolio 18: Saratoga to the Sea Trail connecting Quarry Park to Sanborn County Park; and
- Portfolio 23: Mt. Umunhum Trail and Bay Area Ridge Trail spur at Sierra Azul Preserve.

In addition to the trail components completed for the four MAA portfolios listed above, progress has been made on the trail components of 13 of the 21 remaining portfolios.

New trail mileage opened to the public is continuously tracked in the District's GIS database. Some of the completed trail projects have led to opening entirely new preserves or new areas of preserves, like the Mount Umunhum area in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (**4.4 miles of new trails**), western Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (**7.6 miles**), and the Sears Ranch Road area of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (**7.9 miles**).

Other trail projects, such as the Ravenswood Bay Trail connection in Ravenswood Preserve (**0.6 miles**), Oljon & Steam Donkey Trails in El Corte de Madera Preserve (**2.3 miles**), and the Mindego Hill Trail in Russian Ridge Preserve (1.2 miles) were additions to an existing trail network. Although the Ravenswood Bay Trail connection was only 0.6 miles long, it was an incredibly challenging project to secure the property rights and build the public access infrastructure. Its completion established an impressive 80 miles of continuous Bay Trail access for the public. This trail project also included an additional 1.4 miles of accessibility improvements to existing trails (not included in the total of new trail mileage).

Alpine Road Trail (**2.3 miles**) is included as part of the new trail mileage total as the project reopened a critical regional trail corridor to public use after many years of significant damage that technically closed the corridor to public access. The Saratoga to the Summit Trail (**5.1 miles**) was a joint project with the City of Saratoga and Santa Clara County Parks to connect Quarry Park in Saratoga to Sanborn County Park and to the larger Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail.

These new trails are shown in Attachment 3. With the 31.4 miles of new publicly accessible trails, approximately 4,200 acres of open space are now available for public enjoyment.

MAA Trail Projects Underway

Tremendous progress has also been made on trails that will be opened in the future. For example, many of the trail segments that will open in the next few years as part of the Phase II Trails at Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve have already been built. The trail opening will occur once the final connections are made, and the trail network is ready for public use. Elsewhere, the groundwork through the acquisition of essential properties has been laid for the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and the Upper Stevens Creek Trail. In addition, as of 2014, much of the land needed to connect Mount Umunhum to Nisene Marks State Park has also been secured – only a few pieces remain to realize this regional trail goal in Sierra Azul Preserve (Portfolio 25).

Efforts also continue in securing trail easements and land rights along the gaps of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, with some of the most recent acquisitions occurring in upper La Honda Creek Preserve (Eberhard Property) and El Sereno Preserve (to connect to Sanborn County Park). As part of the Fiscal Year 2024-26 three-year Capital improvement and Action Program (CIAP), the District anticipates beginning the construction of more than 10 miles of new trail to open an additional approximately 1,500 acres of open space for public access. During the same period, the District will also begin the planning, scoping, and permitting for an additional 19+ miles of future trail to allow public access to another approximately 3,500 acres of open space. These planned projects are also shown in Attachment 3.

Vision Plan Trail Goals

The Board-approved Vision Plan also identifies trail goals for the District, most of which overlap with MAA, and others that expand beyond what MAA is capable of funding. Unlike the MAA ballot language, which does not specify a trail count or mileage target, the Vision Plan identifies the ambitious goal of adding 200 miles of trail as part of the top 25 Vision Plan priority actions. Other ambitious Vision Plan goals that specify a numeric total for the top 25 priority actions include: the preservation of over 50,000 acres of open space lands, opening 20,000 acres of lands to public access, and providing 13 new staging and parking areas. The [Vision Plan](#) states that these “priority actions provide the District and its partners with an important high-level guide — not a specific prescription — for the next 40 years” (refer to page 3 of the Executive Summary and page 54, Chapter 5: Priority Action Profiles).

Distinguishing Between Measure AA and the Vision Plan

As the Board is aware, most of the components of the top 25 Vision Plan Priority Actions were folded into Measure AA and became the basis for the MAA Expenditure Plan. Although the aspiration at the start was to fold all capital projects that were identified in the top 25 Vision Plan Priority Actions into MAA, through polling research conducted by Peninsula Open Space Trust to inform the ballot measure, it was clear that the District would need to cap the funding measure at \$300 Million over its 30-year timeframe to keep the annual tax rate at a level that the voters could support. Given this cap, most, but not all, of the capital projects were able to be folded into MAA. As a result, certain capital projects, including numerous trail projects and land conservation projects listed in the Vision Plan (and which roll into the ambitious goal counts listed in the Vision Plan) will need to be completed outside of MAA using General Funds, grant funds, or other funding sources.

Most recently, this reality came to fruition with ***Portfolio #21 Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects***, which allocates \$17,478,000 to complete numerous capital projects, including opening the preserve to hiking and biking access and providing parking areas and trails. This portfolio is now fully spent/encumbered, with no remaining funds available for future trails. MAA funds used to date have allowed for the opening of the western and Alma College areas of Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve, including upgrades and repairs to over 7 miles of legacy roads, construction of more than 0.5 miles of ADA-accessible pathways, a bridge replacement, retaining wall and drainage repairs, a new 52-car parking area, a trail crossing over Bear Creek Road, and rehabilitation of the Alma College Cultural Area. The remaining Preserve Plan work (and work that was rolled into the Vision Plan trail counts) includes the Phase II and Phase III Trails work. The Phase II Trails work is currently underway and being funded through the Proposition 68 California River Parkways Grant, which is administered through the California Natural Resources Agency. At this time, Phase III work is not yet programmed, nor have funds been identified to support its implementation.

As a reminder, MAA is a 30-year funding measure while the Vision Plan is described as a plan that “charts the course for the next 40 years and beyond” (refer to Executive Summary page 1, first paragraph). However, many people have conflated the two. For example, in a [San Jose Mercury News Op-Ed](#) authored by Congresswoman Anna Eshoo in support of MAA, the funding measure is described as funding 200 miles of new trail. There appears to be other Op-Ed pieces that make similar statements, including one found in the [Los Altos Town Crier](#) written by Gary Kremen. As a result, there are members of the public who assume MAA will fund and complete the 200 miles of trail called out in the Vision Plan.

As described above, the voter-approved \$300 million in MAA funding provides the District with a significant funding source to deliver projects and was known at the time to be insufficient to complete all of the Vision Plan goals. However, the District continues to work on completing both the MAA-funded capital projects and the remaining capital projects envisioned in the Vision Plan. In fact, the District’s CIAP includes both MAA-funded and General Fund 10-funded capital projects to make progress on both fronts. In addition, the Grants Program continues to aggressively seek outside grant funds to complete the entirety of the work. Even though the Vision Plan projects that fall outside MAA do provide for a longer implementation timeframe, the District continues to make progress on completing these additional trails and land conservation goals.

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Attachments:

1. Measure AA Expenditure Plan by Portfolio
2. Measure AA Factsheet Brochure
3. Public Access Trail Maps

Attachment 1

MEASURE AA EXPENDITURE PLAN BY PORTFOLIO

Text pertaining to trail projects is **highlighted in yellow** for ease of identification

| | |
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| South Bay Foothills (Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Saratoga, and Santa Cruz Mountains) | |
| 18 | South Bay Foothills: Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Wildlife Corridor Protect wildlife corridor along Highway 9. Connect trail to Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Skyline-to-Sea Trail. \$1,365,000 |
| 19 | EI Sereno: Dog Trails and Connections Provide infrastructure to open trails to dogs. Develop connections to Skyline, Sanborn County Park, & Lexington Reservoir. \$2,254,000 |
| 20 | South Bay Foothills: Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements Establish safe corridors for mountain lions across Highway 17. Establish Bay Area Ridge Trail crossing. \$13,966,000 |
| 21 | Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects Open for hiking, equestrian activities. Provide parking areas, trails; upgrade stables. Restore & protect habitats for various species. Repair roads & trails to reduce sediment. Rehabilitate Alma College site. \$17,478,000 |
| 22 | Sierra Azul: Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects Develop multi-use trail & plan future trails as land is available. Develop parking. Restore plant communities and soils. Install trailside amenities. Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor in upper Los Gatos Creek watershed. \$6,714,000 |
| 23 | Sierra Azul: Mt. Umunhum Public Access and Interpretation Projects Open Mt. Umunhum for multi-use public access to summit via road and trail. Open Bay Area Ridge Trail and nearby trail connections. Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor. \$27,972,000 |
| 24 | Sierra Azul: Rancho de Guadalupe Family Recreation Open Rancho de Guadalupe to public access. Develop accessible multi-use trails with amenities such as parking and family recreation. Restore habitat for rare species. Protect cultural and natural resources. \$10,078,000 |
| 25 | Sierra Azul: Loma Prieta Area Public Access, Regional Trails and Habitat Projects Provide public access and recreation, including small campground. Develop, improve, connect regional multi-use trails to Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, to protected land to east, and to Mt. Umunhum. Protect Steelhead habitat, rare plants and grasslands, restore Knobcone Pine stands. \$7,986,000 |
| | |

Peninsula Foothills and Bay

(Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Atherton, Redwood City, San Carlos, Woodside, Portola Valley, Skyline

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| 2 | Regional: Bayfront Habitat Protection and Public Access Partnerships Partner to complete gaps in Bay Trail and develop city-to-bay trails. Support wetland restoration and associated interpretive facilities. Preserve additional bayfront open space. \$5,052,000 |
| 4 | El Corte de Madera Creek: Bike Trail and Water Quality Projects Develop single-use biking/hiking trails, complete Ridge Trail gaps, and develop trail system leading to parking area. Restore damaged trails to improve water quality. Preserve additional open space as available. \$8,376,000 |
| 5 | La Honda Creek: Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration and Conservation Grazing Projects Open upper half of the preserve to public; provide biking/hiking/equestrian trails, dog access, and staging areas. Provide loop & connector trails. Restore habitat for rare species. Improve fencing, corrals, and water systems to reintroduce conservation grazing. \$11,733,000 |
| 6 | Windy Hill: Trail Improvements, Preservation and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership Improve trails, complete pond facilities. Increase multi-use trails, study possible improvements to increase dog use. Open Hawthorns Area; develop trails connecting to Portola Valley and Palo Alto trails. Partner to protect, restore, and interpret historic buildings. Improve habitat conditions in Los Trancos Creek. Preserve additional scenic open space as available. \$12,740,000 |
| 8 | La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of Upper San Gregorio Watershed & Ridge Trail Completion Preserve upper San Gregorio watershed; restore endangered species habitats. Support opportunities to provide additional water for fisheries. Complete Bay Area Ridge Trail multi-use connections and gaps. Provide additional public use facilities. \$15,347,000 |
| 9 | Russian Ridge: Public Recreation, Grazing and Wildlife Protection Projects Open currently closed areas of preserve. Construct and extend trails. Improve fencing, corrals, and water systems to reintroduce conservation grazing. Improve habitat for sensitive species, implement pond enhancement projects for garter snakes and red-legged frogs. \$5,560,000 |
| 10 | Coal Creek: Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use Reopen Alpine Road as trail connection between Portola Valley & Skyline Blvd. Reroute trails to reduce erosion and improve visitor experience. \$8,017,000 |
| 11 | Rancho San Antonio: Interpretive Improvements, Refurbishing, and Transit Solutions Add welcome center, refurbish and add interpretive exhibits to Deer Hollow Farm. Support of transit improvement options such as bike trails, bikeshare station, bus service, or additional parking. \$10,811,000 |
| 12 | Peninsula/South Bay Cities: Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail Support work by cities to develop the middle section of the Stevens Creek Trail and enhance neighborhood connections. Support work by partners to complete stream corridor restoration and steelhead habitat enhancement below dam. Develop and install interpretive signage. \$1,038,000 |

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| 16 | Long Ridge: Trail, Conservation and Habitat Restoration Projects (Saratoga) Improve roadside parking and provide restrooms. Develop new trail connections to Eagle Rock and Devils Canyon. Repair trails for year-round multi-use access. Protect watersheds for steelhead. Preserve additional open space as available. Implement pond and habitat enhancement restoration projects to benefit rare species. \$5,140,000 |
| 17 | Regional: Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail Complete multi-use connection between the Bay Trail & Bay Area Ridge Trail above the reservoir through Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve & Lower/Upper Stevens Creek County Parks. Improve Preserve trails and neighborhood connections. Preserve additional open space as available. \$7,760,000 |
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Coast (Half Moon Bay, San Gregorio, Pescadero, La Honda,)

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|----|---|
| 1 | Miramontes Ridge: Gateway to the Coast Public Access, Stream Restoration and Agriculture Enhancement Preserve scenic open space land as available, and establish wildlife corridor. Restore fish and red-legged frog habitats in Madonna Creek watershed. Partner to enhance water availability for agriculture and fish. Develop trail loop system, including Ridge Trail and neighborhood access points. Develop staging area, repair bridges. \$27,774,000 |
| 3 | Purisima Creek Redwoods: Purisima-to-Sea Trail, Watershed Protection and Conservation Grazing Complete and open multi-use Purisima-to-Sea trail connection between Ridge Trail and Coastal Trail, and new parking areas. Preserve additional open space as available. Remove fish barriers and restore Lobitos Creek. Restore ponds for endangered species. \$7,608,000 |
| 7 | La Honda Creek: Driscoll Ranch Public Access, Endangered Wildlife Protection and Conservation Grazing Open Driscoll Ranch Area; provide biking/hiking/equestrian trails, limited dog access, parking areas, and interpretive displays. Develop loop & connector trails. Restore habitat for endangered species. Restore La Honda Creek; remove fish migration barriers. \$14,825,000 |
| 13 | Cloverdale Ranch: Wildlife Protection, Grazing and Trail Connections Improve fencing, corrals, and water systems to increase conservation grazing and sustain large contiguous grasslands. Restore habitat for endangered species. Provide trail connections to nearby State parks. \$15,712,000 |
| 14 | Regional: Trail Connections and Campgrounds Develop trails between Butano, Pescadero County Park, Pescadero, Russian Ridge, and between Skyline and Portola Redwoods, Big Basin State Park. Partner with County and State Parks to improve existing campgrounds. \$3,966,000 |
| 15 | Regional: Redwood Protection and Salmon Fishery Conservation Preserve additional open space as available. Protect and enhance redwood stands, mountain scenery, various habitats and steelhead salmon. \$50,728,000 |



Measure AA Regional Open Space | Access, Preservation and Restoration Bond



The Midpen Board of Directors voted to place a general obligation bond measure on the June 3, 2014 ballot. The decision came after a long public process to help shape the direction and priorities of the District into the future. The resulting vision plan reflects the public's priorities to expand, enhance, and connect regional trails and open space areas, to preserve open space, and to complete restoration projects.

The measure requires a two-thirds vote in Midpen's jurisdiction in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and a portion of unincorporated Santa Cruz County.

HIGHLIGHTS

Based on public input and feedback, future bond money would:

- Expand public access to protected land
- Save local redwood forests
- Provide clean air and water by restoring land that feeds our lakes, streams, ponds and waterways
- Preserve agriculture along the San Mateo Coast
- Restore native vegetation to create a healthy habitat for wildlife and preserve biodiversity

OVERSIGHT

An independent citizen oversight committee will review that funds are spent as promised.



TO LEARN MORE

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AMOUNT & COST

To improve access to hiking and biking opportunities, protect and preserve redwood forests, natural open spaces, the scenic beauty of our region and coastline, critical wildlife habitat, restore creeks to protect water quality, and reduce forest fire risk; shall Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District be authorized to issue up to \$300 million in bonds, at a tax rate not to exceed \$3.18 per \$100,000 of assessed value of property owned, with expenditures verified by an independent citizen oversight committee?

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Founded by voters in 1972, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has protected 62,000 acres of open space in 26 preserves offering places for hiking, biking, horseback riding, or simply connecting with nature close to home and free of charge.

THE 17 CITIES THAT COMPRISE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SAN MATEO COUNTY

Atherton
East Palo Alto
Half Moon Bay
Menlo Park
Portola Valley
Redwood City
San Carlos
Woodside

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Cupertino
Los Altos
Los Altos Hills
Los Gatos
Monte Sereno
Mountain View
Palo Alto
Saratoga
Sunnyvale



Projects to be Funded by Measure AA

Through a public visioning process, Midpen staff and its Community Advisory Committee identified current and future project areas of high priority. These include adding trails and trail connections, opening new preserves, protecting redwood forests, preserving farmland, restoring wetlands and streams, providing habitat connectivity and reducing fire risk. The funding for this bond measure will be used toward the 25 highest priority projects. A complete list with more details can be found at [**www.openspace.org/MeasureAA**](http://www.openspace.org/MeasureAA).



Projects to be Funded by Measure AA



1. Miramonte Ridge: San Mateo Coast public access, stream restoration and agricultural enhancement projects
2. Regional: Bayfront habitat protection and public access partnerships
3. Purisima Creek Redwoods: Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail completion, watershed protection, and conservation grazing projects
4. El Corte de Madera Creek: Bike trail and water quality project
5. La Honda Creek: Upper area recreation, habitat restoration, and conservation grazing projects
6. Windy Hill: Trail improvements, preservation and partnership of Hawthorn Area historic area
7. La Honda Creek: Driscoll Ranch access, endangered wildlife protection and conservation grazing projects
8. La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail completion
9. Russian Ridge: Public recreation, grazing and wildlife protection projects
10. Coal Creek: Reopening Alpine Road for trail use
11. Rancho San Antonio: Interpretive improvements, refurbishing and transit solutions
12. Peninsula/South Bay Cities: Partnering to complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail
13. Cloverdale Coastal Ranch: Wildlife protection, grazing, and trail connections
14. Regional: Trail connections between regional, county and state parks
15. Regional: Redwood protection and salmon fishery conservation
16. Long Ridge: Trail, conservation and habitat restoration projects
17. Regional: Completion of Upper Stevens Creek Trail
18. South Bay Foothills: Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and wildlife corridor
19. El Sereno: Dog trails and connection to Skyline, Sanborn County Park, and Lexington Reservoir
20. South Bay Foothills: Safe wildlife corridors across Hwy. 17; new Bay Area Ridge Trail crossing
21. Bear Creek Redwoods: Public recreation and interpretive projects
22. Sierra Azul: Cathedral Oaks public access and conservation projects
23. Sierra Azul: Mt. Umunhum public access and interpretation projects
24. Sierra Azul: Rancho de Guadalupe family recreation and interpretive projects
25. Sierra Azul: Loma Prieta area public access, regional trails and habitat protection

www.openspace.org/MeasureAA

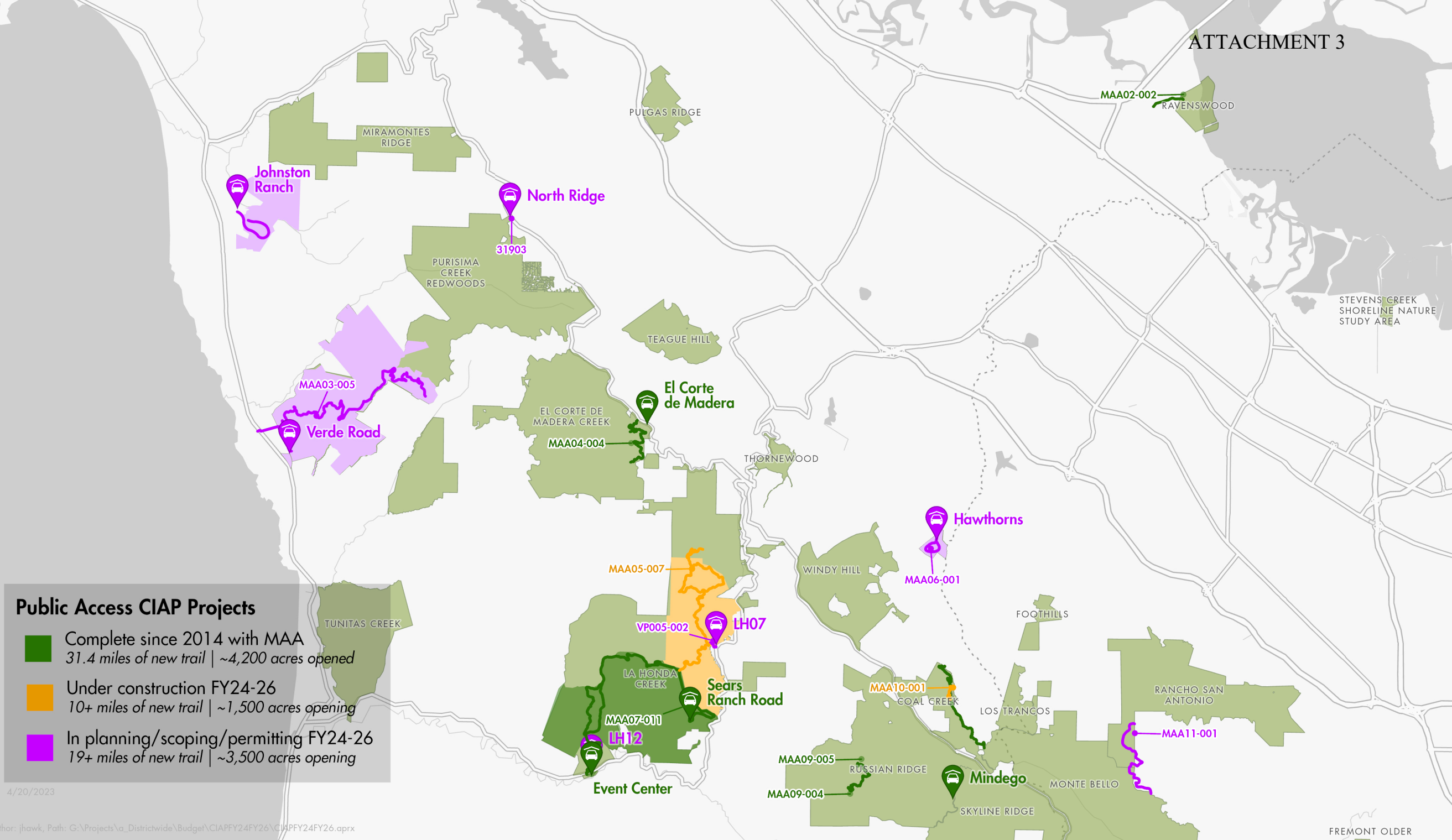


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Public Access CIAP Projects

- Complete since 2014 with MAA
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- Under construction FY24-26
10+ miles of new trail | ~1,500 acres opening
- In planning/scoping/permitting FY24-26
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4/20/2023



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4/20/2023

