



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: May 10, 2023

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Matt Anderson, Visitor Services Manager / Chief Ranger

SUBJECT: Interim Public Access at Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve

BACKGROUND

With the acquisition of Cloverdale Ranch lands, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) will own and operate a new preserve in southwestern San Mateo County adjacent to the town of Pescadero. Escrow is scheduled to close by the end of June 2023. This will be the District's southernmost preserve on the San Mateo Coast. While public access to the Wilbur's Watch Trail will continue under District ownership, planning and development of additional trails and expanded public access is anticipated to take five to 10 years to complete. Anticipating high public interest to visit and experience the new Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve, the Visitors Services Department has prepared a three-phased Interim Public Access Plan to provide limited public access while the planning and development of new trails is programmed and completed.

PHASE I: COMMUNITY FIELD DAYS -- July 2023

The first phase of the Interim Public Access Plan is a series of Community Field Days, scheduled for July 8 and July 22, 2023. Prior to open registration, the District will conduct specific outreach to the Coastside community through the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council (PMAC) and other Coastside community groups such as Puente de la Costa Sur. Following these outreach efforts, registration will be open to the public at-large. Interested persons will pre-register for one of two time slots each day with up to 20 participants in each offering for a total of 80 participants. Additional dates may be added if there is high demand for these activities.

The Community Field Days will be held in the northern portion of the preserve off Bean Hollow Road where participants will park off street in a level, mowed area. The participants will meet near the informal parking area with District staff and Docent Naturalists for an introduction to the District, including our mission and goals, and an overview of the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve. A bilingual District Ranger and a contract translator will be present for Spanish translation as needed. The events will also serve as a training opportunity for a new group of volunteers called Community Docents. These volunteers are local community members who have expressed an interest in providing limited docent services specifically for Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve.

From the informal parking area location, District Docent Naturalists will lead the participants on a hike to High Hill, a scenic hilltop with panoramic views overlooking the preserve and beyond. During the hike, Docent Naturalists will highlight the resource values, including conservation grazing, water resources and endangered and threatened species present on the preserve. District staff will be present at the hilltop to address questions about general District processes, projects and future planning for Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve.

PHASE II: DOCENT LED HIKES -- Spring 2024

Assisted by the new Community Docents, Visitor Services will add Docent Naturalist-led introductory hikes in the Spring of 2024. These hikes will focus on the cultural and natural history of the property, natural resource protections, and the District's planning process for opening new trails and areas of the preserve. We anticipate offering 3 or 4 of these hikes in 2024 with up to 20 participants each, depending on final starting point location and parking availability.

PHASE III: LIMITED PERMIT ACCESS -- Summer 2024/Spring 2025.

Pending the creation of an interim unguided access plan (to be developed in collaboration with Natural Resources, Land and Facilities, Planning, and Real Property departments) a limited number of day use permits will be offered to the public for self-guided access to designated areas. The interim unguided access plan will include suitable areas for permit parking, use of existing roads, and access to vistas and points of interest. Certain areas will be excluded due to use restrictions or concerns regarding sensitive species populations. A map will be created reflecting open and closed areas that will be included with every permit. If the District is unable to meet the Summer 2024 target for Limited Permit Access, three to four Docent Naturalist-led Hikes will instead be offered in Fall 2024/Spring 2025.

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