



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: May 28, 2025

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Matthew Shapero, Conservation Grazing Program Manager

SUBJECT: Informational Report on the Lone Madrone Corrals Replacement Project

SUMMARY

The Lone Madrone Corral Replacement Project is a Measure AA Capital Project in the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve that is expected to begin construction late Summer 2025 (FY26). The project has two primary purposes: 1) to provide functional livestock corrals to facilitate grazing operations at the Lone Madrone Grazing Unit and continue an effective conservation grazing program; and 2) to upgrade the condition and durability of the infrastructure around the Red Barn, which is a focal rural and agricultural landscape that is valued by people traveling along Highway 84.

Given the high level of community interest previously expressed in the Red Barn area at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, the goal of this FYI is to provide the Board of Directors (Board) with a preliminary report on general project status and design prior to returning to the Board for consideration of a contract award for construction.

DISCUSSION

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) purchased the property where the Red Barn is located (formerly MacDonald Ranch or “Rocking Martini Ranch”) as an addition to La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve in 2006. The area surrounding the Red Barn itself has historically been used for cattle processing intermittently for decades, both prior to District ownership and since 2014 when grazing was re-introduced on the property (Lone Madrone Grazing Unit). The white corral that can be seen from Highway 84 had been used in the past for a variety of agricultural uses. However, for more than a decade, this corral has been non-functional as the wood materials have outlived their lifespan (see Figures 1 and 2).

When grazing was re-introduced in 2014, District staff worked with the new grazing tenants to set up temporary cattle processing facilities to serve the immediate needs of the operation as an alternative for the non-functional white corral. Those temporary facilities have been in place for approximately eleven years and are no longer sufficient for the ongoing operation of the grazing lease. The Lone Madrone Corral Replacement Project aims to rehabilitate the

site by replacing and right-sizing the existing corral to serve the needs of the grazing operation into the future while at the same time maintaining the scenic quality of the existing white fencing. This project does not include the white wooden fencing fronting Highway 84, which will require a highway encroachment permit. A future project to replace that portion of fencing would use similar materials as proposed below to match the existing aesthetic.

In 2016, District staff hired a qualified historic consultant, LSA, to conduct a Historic Resource Evaluation for the Red Barn and corral. LSA determined that the Red Barn dating to circa 1892 is likely eligible for listing in national and state historic registries. However, the corral dating to the 1950s, is not historically significant and therefore can technically be altered or removed. Nevertheless, many in the community and motorists who travel along Highway 84 appreciate the white wooden fence and white corral that lend to the aesthetic picturesque, ranch appeal of the site, and it is the District's intention to maintain that aesthetic while improving upon the durability and functionality of the corral and interior fencing infrastructure. Replacing the corral like-for-like in wood, however, is not cost-effective, would create a District asset that had a marginal lifespan, and present ongoing high maintenance demands. Instead, District staff are planning to use two alternative products that will mimic the visual appearance of the existing white corrals and interior fencing.

The new livestock corral (Figure 3) is designed to be welded metal pipe painted white (Figure 4). Pipe corrals are considered cattle industry standard for their sturdiness, effectiveness, and longevity. While they are typically left un-finished, painting them white will match the current aesthetic of the site. In addition, the fencing that runs along interior driveways, which are also visible from Highway 84, will be replaced with a "wood-fence-like" product made of HDPE (high density polyethylene) (Figure 5) that will match the post and four-board ranch-style appearance of the existing white wood fence and will have much greater strength and longevity. Interior wood fencing that sections off the current corral will be removed to provide a larger holding pen for cattle while the new corral will be smaller to meet the grazing operator's needs (Figure 3).

District staff have taken a careful and sensitive approach in designing the Lone Madrone Corral Replacement Project to balance form and function. Ultimately, the replacement infrastructure will significantly improve the utility of the equipment for the grazing operation, while also maintaining the beloved and iconic ranch aesthetic along the Highway 84 corridor.

Prior to bringing a proposed contract award to the Board for construction in late summer, District staff will reach out to La Honda community members to inform them of the upcoming project and our design and construction approach.

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Figure 1. Overview of Lone Madrone Corral site looking east. Pens and processing equipment in the right of the photo are completely non-functional.



Figure 2. Detail of Lone Madrone Corral looking north.



Figure 3. Site Map



Figure 4. Example of metal pipe fence painted white (used for corral)



Figure 5. Example of HDPE fence (Proposed for interior fencing along driveways)