



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

LEGISLATIVE, FUNDING, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

R-25-137
November 4, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Public Signature Event

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Review and provide feedback on the concept and initial planning of a Public Signature Event to increase in-person outreach and deepen community connections.

SUMMARY

To engage new audiences, foster stronger community ties, align the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) with peer agencies and help position the District as a regional leader in conservation and education, Public Affairs is proposing a public signature event—an event hosted by the District and focused on District priorities—to be hosted beginning in FY27.

The conceptual plan for the event includes a rich blend of interactive, educational and community-centered experiences that have proven to be valuable in engaging the public and are based on previous Public Affairs-hosted community events and participation in successful partner events. Following the inaugural event, staff would conduct an evaluation to assess effectiveness, community reach and impact on staff time. This information would help establish a sustainable event cadence that continues to foster meaningful relationships with the communities that the District serves without overextending the available resources.

DISCUSSION

Background

Many peer agencies and non-profit organizations host mission-driven, community-oriented, reoccurring events. These public events demonstrate how a consistent, mission-aligned celebration or festival can elevate brand identity and deepen public connection.

Event Name	Agency	Timing	Estimated Attendance
Wild and Scenic Film Festival	Peninsula Open Space Trust	Spring	500+ in person 1000+ virtual
Coastal Wildflower Day	California State Parks	Spring	300-500 in person
Summerfest	San Mateo County Parks	Summer	3,000+ in person

Fall Festival	Santa Clara County Parks	Fall	1000+ in person
Fall Fest	San Mateo County Parks	Fall	300-500 in person
Day on the Bay	Santa Clara County Parks	Fall	1000+ in person

In the past, the District has hosted several different types of educational and celebratory community events, including WingDing Family Fest (hosted at Skyline Open Space Preserve between 2013 and 2017), various trail and preserve opening events (e.g. El Corte de Madera Opening Event, Mindego Gateway Opening Event, Bear Creek Redwoods Grand Opening and La Honda Creek Grand Opening), partner appreciation events (e.g. legislative lunches and partner mixers), and other commemorative or anniversary events (e.g. the 40th Anniversary Founders' Day celebration, the 50th Anniversary Bayside Family Festival and the 50th Anniversary Coastsides Community Celebration).

The two events hosted in honor of the District's 50th Anniversary were large-scale, post-COVID public events. The outcomes and performance of those events are the best indicators of the current climate for community events. The positive performance of those events indicates people's willingness and desire to attend more in-person events in their communities post-COVID.

These two events targeted younger audiences, families and the Coastsides and Bayside communities through connections with local vendors and partner organizations, as well as programming focused on engagement and education: wildlife and nature demonstrations and educational talks. These elements proved to be successful and would be replicated in the plans for a signature event.

Over 800 people attended the Bayside Family Festival, and over 1,200 people attended the Coastsides Community Celebration. In post event surveys, over 95% of participants rated the events to be "good" to "excellent," and over 90% of respondents indicated that they would "likely" or "definitely" visit a District preserve in the future.

The 50th Anniversary events were also successful in creating new partner relationships, reinvigorating lapsed relationships, and cementing long-standing ones. More than 60 partners participated in both the Bayside and Coastsides 50th Anniversary community events, with approximately 15% of these partners being new relationships for the District.

Conceptual Event Plans

The proposed public signature event is intended to be welcoming to and engaging for a broad cross-section of the community with intentional outreach to families, young adults and students, local leaders and elected officials, underserved communities, Coastsides and Bayside communities and partner organizations.

Building on past success, the signature event would offer a dynamic mix of interactive and educational experiences designed to deepen community connection. Programming could include items such as District information booths, partner booths and tables, educational and interactive activities (e.g. scavenger hunts, live wildlife presentations, demonstrations), stage presentations

from staff and partners, local food and beverage vendors, local agricultural displays, cultural elements of celebration (e.g. local live music, folklorico dancing, youth performances) and more. While these components represent a broad menu of potential offerings, each signature event would be tailored to reflect the unique characteristics of the community in which it is hosted, and to align with community priorities and District goals.

The proposed signature events should be visible and accessible to target audiences, ideally located nearer to population centers on the Coastsides and/or Baysides. Organizational priorities should also be considered in site selection for the event (e.g. Coastsides outreach needs, new preserve or trail openings, community outreach goals). Final site selection would take into consideration the ease of parking and transportation, ease of site setup and Committee feedback. Due to current agency priorities, it is recommended that the first signature event take place on the Coastsides.

Like many peer agencies' events—such as State Parks' Coastal Wildflower Day, Santa Clara County Parks' Fall Festival, and local Earth Day celebrations — a signature event can be tied to seasonal or ecological phenomena, as well as awareness dates or holidays. These themes provide opportunities to highlight the District's mission through engaging, seasonally relevant storytelling that connects with the public's interests and values.

Potential Event Site	Region	Notes
Johnston Ranch (Half Moon Bay)	Coastsides	High visibility; aligns with Coastsides outreach goals; staff have prior experience hosting events at this location. This site is recommended for the inaugural event.
Ravenswood / Cooley Landing (East Palo Alto)	Baysides	Strong diverse outreach potential; accessible urban location; staff have prior experience hosting events at this location.
Pescadero I.D.E.S. Grounds	Coastsides	Community-centered venue; supports agricultural and cultural programming; staff have prior experience attending events at this location. There would likely be a fee to gain access to this site.
Portola Valley Town Center	Peninsula	Centrally located near I-280 with easy parking availability; next to Windy Hill; good for civic and partner engagement. Not easily accessible by public transit.
Skyline Ridge / Windy Hill / Rancho San Antonio	Peninsula	Showcases District lands and habitats; ideal for possible rotating event model. However, transportation to these sites can be difficult.
Appropriate partner sites, e.g.: PIE Ranch / Harley Farms / State Parks	Coastsides	Bolsters relationships with partners; supports agricultural and cultural programming. However, hosting events at partner sites can dilute the District-focused message intended for the signature events.

Following the event, staff would evaluate success and organizational impact of the event based on community attendance and participations, outreach and media impressions, participant and partner feedback and satisfaction, cost-effectiveness and budget adherence and resources dedicated to the event. This information will be used to help establish a sustainable event

cadence that continues to foster meaningful relationships with the communities that the District serves, without overextending District resources.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact. If approved, funding for the Signature Event will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets during the annual Budget and Action Plan process. The budget for the event is planned not to exceed \$30,000.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item has not been previously reviewed by a Board Committee.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLINACE

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

NEXT STEPS

Public Affairs staff will take into account feedback from the Committee and, if supported, move forward with solidifying plans for a Signature Event and present the proposal to the full Board.

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