



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-26-145
October 6, 2026

REVISED AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Consideration of a Use Designation Change for Myotis Trail at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Forward a recommendation to the full Board of Directors to remove and restore a 0. ~~125~~ ¹²⁵-mile segment of Myotis Trail and designate the remaining 0. ~~1025~~ ¹⁰²⁵-mile section as hiking only in consideration of the new North Parking Area and connecting easy-access loop trail.

SUMMARY

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is preparing to open a new parking area with a connecting, hiking-only, easy-access loop trail in Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Preserve) to the public in early 2027. The District Board of Directors (Board) approved these improvements on January 24, 2024 (R-24-15) and April 8, 2026 (R-26-43) respectively, and construction is currently underway. As designed given topographic constraints to keep grades below 5%, the easy-access loop trail would be fully bisected by the Myotis Trail along its central axis, resulting in a high density of trails near the new parking area with four parallel trail alignments and a high concentration of trail intersections along the easy-access loop trail. These redundant parallel trails and number of intersections raise concerns about clarity of travel for all trail users and the ability to keep the easy-access trail tread free from horse damage. The General Manager therefore recommends changes for Myotis Trail to improve clarity of the updated trail network, minimize redundant trails within a small area, limit the number of complex trail intersections affecting the easy-access loop trail, and keeping the surface tread of the easy-access loop trail smooth and accessible for people with mobility disabilities (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION

Background

The Board approved the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan (Preserve Plan) in January 2017. The Preserve Plan includes three phases to be implemented over the course of 20 years. Implementation of the Preserve Plan began in 2017, and portions of the Preserve opened for low intensity public access in 2019, including the Alma Parking Area and 6 miles of trails. In 2024, the District opened 4.6 miles of additional new trails (referred to as Phase II Trails) to the public in the northeastern section of the Preserve. On April 8, 2026, the Board adopted a resolution to

approve an Addendum to the Preserve Plan, which includes the addition of the easy-access loop trail that is now under construction.

The easy-access loop trail will be a 0.5-mile trail, five to six feet wide, that follows the topography of the land to create a gently sloped path with a grade not exceeding 5% and compacted surface material. Easy-access trails are generally built to accommodate strollers, walkers, wheelchairs and anyone desiring a less strenuous open space experience; they are typically unpaved. More detailed trail descriptions can be found at the following website: <https://www.openspace.org/where-to-go/what-to-do/easy-access-opportunities>.

District trail crews are constructing the easy-access loop trail from the North Parking Area trailhead to tie into the existing Phase II Trail network. The location of the trail alignment was greatly constrained to achieve a slope of no more than 5% for easy accessibility. The proposed use designation for the easy-access loop trail is hiking only, consistent with trail standards. This designation is recommended in order to prevent damage to the trail surface from equestrian use (e.g., hoof damage given the weight of horses, especially when the ground is wet or soft), which would otherwise impede the ability for people with mobility disabilities to use the easy-access loop trail.

Myotis Trail

The alignment of the new easy-access loop trail is currently intersected by Toad Hollow Trail at two locations and bisected by Myotis Trail along its main axis, with Myotis Trail traversing through the center of the easy-access loop trail. Myotis Trail is a 0.~~25~~-mile road-width trail open to hiking and equestrian uses that extends from Toad Hollow Trail to Oak Knoll Trail. The intersections with and bisection of the easy-access loop trail raise concerns about negative impacts to the trail user experience due to the high density of trails, navigational challenges and wayfinding confusion given the many trail junctions within short distances, and aesthetic impacts from the need for numerous signs and the visibility of multiple parallel trails. The proposed changes as detailed below would address these concerns. However, these changes would reduce the trail mileage open to equestrians by 0.~~25~~-mile and remove certain loop opportunities. The District has received concerns from several members of the equestrian community about the effects of the proposed changes to Myotis Trail on the equestrian experience.

After weighing all the considerations discussed above, the General Manager recommends the following, recognizing that tradeoffs exist to provide a trail system that serves the equestrian community, abled hikers, and visitors who depend on easy-access trails to enjoy their public open space lands. The District has made incredible investments over the course of 10 plus years to first open the western area of the preserve to public access, with hiking and equestrian trails, and most recently to open the northeastern area. With completion of the new easy-access trail, the total network will encompass over 10 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, with a 0.5-mile trail open to hiking only and designed for people with mobility disabilities and those seeking a less strenuous trail experience. Given the aging population of our region, and the Board-approved Strategic Plan goals to expand ADA and easy-access trails and facilities, this proposed change supports the District's efforts to enhance accessibility where appropriate and feasible.

Recommendation – Remove and restore a 0.~~125~~-mile segment of Myotis Trail and designate the remaining 0.~~1025~~-mile section as hiking only

Under this recommendation, a 0.125-mile segment of Myotis Trail that runs through the easy-access loop trail would be removed, with the trail tread de-compacted and restored back to a natural vegetative condition. The remaining 0.1025-mile section of Myotis Trail that connects the easy-access loop trail to the Oak Knoll Trail would be designated for hiking only. Clear regulatory and directional signage would provide clarity of use designation and highlight the easy-access loop trail for hikers seeking a gentler and more accessible pathway.

The Phase II Trail network in the northeastern corner of the Preserve is very dense, with 13 different trails located within a 0.5-square-mile-area. If Myotis Trail remains, there would be four trail alignments approximately 100-150 feet apart running parallel to each other ~~for 0.25 miles~~. The proximity of the trails in the Phase II Trail network is shown in Attachment 3 and photos showing the visibility of trails from different points in the network are shown in Attachment 4. Given the density of the Phase II Trail network, removing the 0.125-mile segment of Myotis Trail reduces redundancies in the trail network, enhances user navigation, and creates a more cohesive trail user experience. The proposed change also supports effective emergency response in the event of a medical/emergency call by reducing the potential for confusion by the requesting visitor(s) and/or external emergency response personnel (note: emergency response is often supported by external partners, including Santa Clara County Fire).

Additionally, Myotis Trail was formerly a “through-cut” road along the ridgeline before the District acquired the property – a type of road that does not meet sustainable trail design standards. This type of road cut restricts natural drainage, causing water to concentrate on and run down the road surface. Without a high level of regular maintenance, the concentrated runoff is expected to erode and impact the accessibility of the easy-access loop trail where the two intersect.

While the proposed changes reduce equestrian access by 0.25-miles out of nearly 10 miles of trails open to equestrians and removes certain loops, multiple other equestrian loop opportunities would remain in the area with lengths and gentle slopes similar to those of Myotis Trail. Therefore, this change is not expected to significantly affect equestrian circulation due to the proximity of alternative similar routes that utilize Toad Hollow Trail, Beaver Trail, Thimbleberry Trail, and Oak Knoll Trail.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

Retain the Myotis Trail, with hiking and equestrian access, while reducing the width to 6 feet

As an alternative, the District can consider retaining Myotis Trail and narrowing the road-width trail from 12 feet to 6 feet to help reduce its visual footprint. However, even with this change in width, the issues discussed above remain regarding the high density of trails and concentration of trail intersections/junctions, visitor confusion and navigational challenges, emergency response struggles, and aesthetic concerns affecting the natural, open space preserve experience for all visitors.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended actions. New signage would be funded from the District’s existing signage budget. Actions to maintain or restore the trail tread is covered under existing operational budgets.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **January 25, 2017:** The Board approved and certified the Environmental Impact Report for the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan. ([R-17-15](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **September 19, 2023:** The Planning and Natural Resources Committee received a presentation on conceptual design alternatives for the North Parking Area and recommended forwarding both options to the full Board with preference for Alternative 2. ([R-23-141](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **January 24, 2024:** The Board accepted a conceptual design to proceed into environmental review and design development. ([R-24-15](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **April 24, 2024:** The Board approved an award of contract to BKF Engineers to complete the design, engineering, permitting, and construction administration for the North Parking Area. ([R-24-29](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **May 28, 2025:** The Board received an FYI Memo documenting project design updates and how they refine and improve upon the original concept design. No action was taken. ([FYI Item](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **April 8, 2026.** The Board adopted a resolution to approve an Addendum to the Preserve Plan to address minor changes to the layout of the footprint of the North Parking Area and the addition of the easy-access Trail. ([R-26-43](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **April 22, 2026.** The Board approved an award of contract to Joseph J. Albanese, Inc. for the construction of the Bear Creek Redwoods North Parking Area. ([R-26-53](#), [Meeting Minutes](#))
- **August 25, 2026.** The Legislative, Finance, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) forwarded a recommendation to the Board to name the new parking area “North Parking Area,” name the easy-access loop trail “Quail Loop Trail,” and designate the use of the easy-access loop trail as hiking only. These proposed names and use designations are compliant with Board Policies. ([R-26-123](#), Meeting Minutes – Attachment 5)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Additional notice was sent to the Bear Creek Redwoods Interested Parties List including preserve, stables, hiking, and equestrian groups. Additionally, notice was sent to the ADA/Easy Access Interested Parties list.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The closing and restoration of redundant trails and related signage is within the scope of activities included in the Preserve Plan and Final Environmental Impact Report to the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan, adopted by Board Resolution No. 17-02 on January 25, 2017.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Committee input and direction, the General Manager will forward the recommended trail use designation to the full Board for consideration and approval. Implementation of subsequent actions are as follows:

Tentative Date	Action
November 2026	Board of Directors Meeting
November 2026	Signage Design
November 2026	Sign Fabrication
December 2026	Sign Delivery
December 2026	Sign Installation
Early 2027	Parking Area and Trail Open to the Public

ATTACHMENTS

1. GM Recommendation: North Parking Area and Easy-Access Loop Trail, Bear Creek Redwoods
2. Alternative Option: North Parking Area and Easy-Access Loop Trail, Bear Creek Redwoods
3. Site Context: North Parking Area and Easy-Access Loop Trail, Bear Creek Redwoods
4. Photos of the Trail Network
5. August 25, 2026 Draft LFPAC Meeting Minutes

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