



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-26-115
Meeting 26-19
August 12, 2026

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Approve an update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* regarding special recognition eligibility for constituent-requested bench dedications to honor or remember a significant supporter or volunteer.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) commemorative bench program allows constituents to request a bench to honor or remember a significant supporter or volunteer. Section III, paragraph D of Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* states that volunteers "shall be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who donated a minimum of 250 volunteer hours and 5 years of service to the District by working for the District's docent or volunteer program." The District's volunteer program is highly successful, with a growing number of volunteers contributing significant time and maintaining long-term involvement. To keep infrastructure installation aligned with the District's commitment to keeping preserves in a natural state, and ensure the sustainability of the commemorative bench program, the General Manager recommends updating the definition to a minimum of 500 volunteer hours and 20 years of service with the docent or volunteer program. The recommended change was carefully reviewed and is supported by the District's Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams.

DISCUSSION

District preserves are generally kept in a natural state to maintain wildlife habitat and protect natural resources. Infrastructure is generally restricted to essential amenities for environmentally sensitive recreation; thus, the density of built amenities is low within the preserves.

There are currently 139 benches on District lands, with 33 of these designated as commemorative benches. As the volunteer program has matured, the District has experienced significant growth in long-standing, dedicated volunteer participation reflecting the strength of the program. Due to this success, nearly 300 volunteers met the current commemorative bench eligibility requirements in 2025. This number is anticipated to continue to grow over time, creating an even greater imbalance between eligibility and available bench opportunities.

To better align program capacity and infrastructure policy goals with the growing maturity and successful expansion of the District's docent and volunteer programs, staff recently evaluated several new eligibility scenarios for Board consideration.

On April 21, 2026, staff presented to the Legislative, Funding & Public Affairs Committee (R-26-47) the scenario of 500 hours and 25 years of service as a possible update to the policy. The Committee was concerned 25 years was too high a threshold and recommended the policy be updated to a "minimum of **500 volunteer hours and 20 years** of service." The 500 hours was discussed as a fair number that accommodates and values the diversity of volunteer roles while recalibrating the eligibility criteria based on the longer tenures and expansive volunteer hours that are now being achieved by District volunteers, as demonstrated below:

	Criteria	Eligible Volunteers
<i>Current Policy</i>	5 years + 250 hours	287
	10 years + 500 hours	99
	15 years+ 500 hours	82
<i>Recommended Policy</i>	20 years + 500 hours	45
	25 years + 500 hours	28

Volunteer Programs

The District benefits from a diverse range of volunteer programs, each contributing uniquely to the mission. While some programs allow for volunteers to do a substantial number of hours per week, other programs involve activities that may not allow for large hourly accumulation, yet they still deliver significant value and high impact. The 500-hour benchmark represents the optimal balance, taking into consideration the different programs' distinct skills, expertise and time allowances. The following are three examples of District volunteer programs, including the various training requirements, depth of involvement and impact, and the typical hours associated with these roles.

Docent Naturalists (DN): Undergo 12+ weeks of classroom style and in-field training with various instructors to support their delivery of in-depth interpretive outings for the public. DN volunteers lead hikes/rides for the members of the public anywhere from quarterly to once a month or more. Although these highly trained volunteers do not normally enter 'high' hours, their contacts are often deep and meaningful.

Advanced Resource Management Stewards (ARMS): Not a direct entry program, volunteers in this program start as Land Stewards and, after expressing interest in a deeper connection, 'graduate' to ARMS once they have demonstrated the commitment and species-specific knowledge required for the solo efforts of this program. They then undergo training, which includes additional species identification, data management in Calflora, and tool use, safety, and check-out. ARMS volunteers are required to visit their site(s) seasonally at a minimum, and more often as needed to manage the site and data plus attend required trainings and meet with their lead VPL for site checks. The deep connection to the land they steward and their volunteer service hours are based on site needs and number of sites managed.

Volunteer Trail Patrol (VTP): Attend a 6-hour training provided by program and ranger staff where the training includes visitor contact scenarios, best practices for collecting data in the field using available technology and responding to emergencies. These volunteers send in online trail patrol reports; their hours hiking or riding the trails constitute their service hours. Actual time spent on public contact versus information gathering (e.g. reporting down trees) varies as does their time in the preserves. From once a month to daily, the commitment in this program varies quite a bit and obtaining ‘high’ hours as a VTP is much more easily attainable than most other programs.

When this item was presented to LFPAC, one of the Committee members requested staff also research 20 years of service + 600 hours, and 20 years of service + 650 volunteer hours. With these scenarios, staff found there was a difference of two people. With such small variance, LFPAC’s recommendation of 500 hours + 20 years of service aligns the commemorative bench program well with the standard milestones (e.g. 250, 500, 750, 1,000 hours) and ensures the program is inclusive to the various volunteer programs and sustainable over time.

Finally, as a reminder, the volunteer program annually recognizes volunteers based on years of service, with awards given out at five-year intervals with increasing significance. The District also maintains separate volunteer memorial signs located at Alpine Pond in Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve and at Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve that offers an alternative option for those looking to have their loved ones recognized, with a much lower threshold requirement of 10 years and 250 hours of service. Volunteers will continue to be acknowledged and celebrated through these other established opportunities.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

On April 21, 2026, the LFPAC reviewed the proposed update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* (R-26-47) and recommended the volunteer eligibility definition in Section III, paragraph D be updated to a “minimum of **500 volunteer hours and 20 years** of service” to keep infrastructure aligned with the District’s commitment to keeping preserves in a natural state and ensure the sustainability of the commemorative bench program.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

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

NEXT STEPS

If approved by the Board, the policy amendment would take effect immediately.

Attachment(s)

1. Revised Board Policy – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*
2. April 21, 2026 LFPAC Committee Minutes
3. Map of currently installed benches

Responsible Department Head/ Prepared by / Contact person:
Lori Low, Public Affairs Manager, Public Affairs Department

Board Policy Manual

Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition	Policy 5.01 Chapter 5 – Historical/Cultural
Effective Date: 8/25/93	Revised Date: 9/12/18
Prior Versions: 8/25/93, 9/14/94, 6/24/98, 9/12/01, 10/8/08, 1/13/10, 10/27/10, 11/13/13	

I. SITE NAMING

All District site names and signs should be kept as simple and functional as possible. When a property is acquired, either as an addition to an existing preserve or for the establishment of a new preserve, a name will be recommended in the Preliminary Use and Management Plan. In most cases, "open space preserve" is appropriate as part of the name; however, there may be circumstances when another designation may be used. In some cases, a temporary name may be retained until the next Comprehensive Use and Management Plan review.

A. Open Space Preserves

The name given to each open space preserve should be general enough to remain suitable if the site is enlarged, but specific enough to give its location some significance. Properties added to an open space preserve may not always be contiguous with that preserve.

1. Preserves shall be named after:

- a) Geographical features of broad, general significance to the preserve;
- b) Historical persons, cultural names, uses, or events broadly associated with the locale.

2. Preserves shall not be named after any individuals other than historical persons as noted above.

B. Preserve Areas, Trails, Site Improvements, Historic Sites and Unnamed Natural Features

This designation refers to specific locations, land formations, trails, natural and physical features, staging areas and other site improvements, and areas of significance within open space preserves. Recognition of significant land gifts, including "bargain" purchases, will be negotiated at the time of the gift or bargain purchase.

1. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements including benches and bridges, historic sites and previously unnamed natural features shall ordinarily be named after:

- a) Geographical, botanical or zoological identification;
- b) Historical persons, uses, or events associated with the site, or persons and organizations listed in Section III: "Special Recognition".

2. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements, historic sites and unnamed natural features may in rare instances be named after a living individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the District, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

II. GIFT RECOGNITION

The purpose of the gift recognition policy is to provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and commend individuals or groups that have made significant contributions of cash, equipment, materials, goods or professional services toward the enhancement of the District, its programs, and its facilities.

A. Unsolicited Cash Gifts:

Up to \$25	Postcard of thanks
\$26 to \$499	Letter signed by General Manager
\$500 to \$1,999	Letter signed by President of the Board
\$2,000 to \$4,999	Letter signed by President of the Board and District gift item (note cards, etc.)
\$5,000 to \$9,999	Letter signed by President of the Board and framed photograph of favorite District preserve
\$10,000 or more	Letter signed by President of the Board and Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication*
*These items will be provided only if desired by the donor.	

III. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) shall be the committee designated to discuss all requests that meet the criteria of the policy for special recognition made by members of the Board of Directors, and after deliberation shall forward a recommendation to the full Board for a vote.

The General Manager or his/her designee will review constituent bench dedication requests to determine eligibility based on the policy guidelines outlined below in Section III D.

Constituent bench requests may be brought to LFPAC if there exists ambiguity regarding whether the request meets the requirements below.

The District places benches in its preserves for three distinct purposes:

A. District Rest Benches

These benches provide constituents with a place to rest. District staff places these benches without involving a District committee or the full Board. Regular benches must be either a backed or a backless standard bench as described in Section V below.

B. Constituent Bench Dedications

These are benches which have been requested by constituents in order to honor or memorialize a member of the public and are funded by the requestors who must pay \$5,000 for a 10-year term. Requests must be in reference to a significant supporter or a volunteer, as defined in Section III D below. The General Manager or his/her designee reviews requests to determine if they meet the eligibility definitions. Requests that are administratively declined because they do not meet the eligibility definitions may be appealed to the General Manager for a second review. Eligible requests will be administratively implemented.

a) Constituent bench dedications shall only be selected from and placed in locations that have been pre-determined by the District and/or approved by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee and/or by the full Board of Directors.

b) If a request for a constituent bench meets the eligibility requirements, the requestor(s) shall pay for the cost of constructing, installing and maintaining a bench and plaque by contributing \$5,000 to cover the 10-year dedication term of the bench.

c) Bench plaques will be 2 x 6 inches in size.

d) Benches must be one of the two District standard bench designs.

e) Constituent bench dedications will have a term limit of 10 years. After 10 years, the original donor will have the option to contribute an additional \$5,000 donation for each additional 10-year term. Should the original donor decline to renew an existing bench, the bench will be offered to the public for re-dedication.

C. District Bench Dedications

These are benches which are installed by the District in response to requests by members of the Board of Directors to honor "Founders," "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers".

a) LFPAC can initiate a bench request and refer a decision to the full Board or individual Board members can initiate a bench request which will be referred to LFPAC for discussion before it is referred to the full Board for a final decision. Honorees must be "Founders", "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers" (per policy Section III D below).

b) For these benches there are no design specification limits or limits on their location. The District will pay for the lifetime cost of the bench.

D. Founders, Significant Supporters, and Volunteers

"Founders", "Significant Supporters", and "Volunteers" are eligible for special recognition, including memorials.

"Founders" shall be defined as an individual or group of individuals who participated in the formation of the District, or were significant supporters of the formation of the District.

"Significant Supporters" shall be defined as individuals or group of individuals who have shown conspicuous or noteworthy support for the District through extraordinary contributions of time and effort to the advancement of the goals, philosophy and mission of the District.

"Volunteers" shall be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who donated a minimum of ~~250 volunteer hours and 5 years of service to the District by working for the District's docent or volunteer program.~~ 500 volunteer hours and 20 years of service to the District by working for the District's docent or volunteer program.

IV. RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC SITES

A. A recognition monument, normally in plaque form, may be considered by the Board if it is in relation to a specific existing building or other remaining structure of significant historic value. In such cases, the plaque will be affixed or in close proximity to the structure itself. If there is no structure, then recognition may be considered for inclusion on District informational materials or trail signage. Such a site, in the absence of a building or structure, will ordinarily not be physically marked except as determined by the Board on a case-by-case basis as part of the Use and Management planning process for the corresponding open space preserve.

Any Board-approved memorial names shall be included in site brochures, maps, or other informational materials.

V. STANDARD BENCH DESIGN SPECIFICATION

A. District Rest Benches and Constituent Bench Dedications, described in III (A) and (B) above, are limited to either of the two following standard bench designs:

Backed bench:

Dumor - Bench 88, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports (color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)
6' or 8' lengths

Backless bench:

Dumor - Bench 103, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports (color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)
103-60PL 6' long, 3 supports
103-80PL 8' long, 3 supports

B. The General Manager or LFPAC can at any point bring designs to the Board that differ from the District's standard bench designs.



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
LEGISLATIVE, FUNDING, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Administrative Office
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Director Holman called the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee to order at 2:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Jed Cyr, Karen Holman, Yoriko Kishimoto

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana M. Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Grants Program Manager Carol Schimke, Senior Grants Technician Caitlin Amarillas, Public Affairs Manager Lori Low, Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams, and Governmental Affairs Program Manager Joshua Hugg

Director Holman announced that the public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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Public comment period opened.

District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Select Committee Chair for 2026 Calendar Year

Director Cyr nominated Director Holman to serve as the Committee Chair for calendar year 2026.

Director Holman accepted the nomination.

Public comment period opened.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to select Director Holman as Committee Chair for Calendar Year 2026.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Approve the November 4, 2025 Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Public comment period opened.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment period closed.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to approve the November 4, 2025 Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

3. Grant Awards for the 2025 Grantmaking Program (R-26-46)

Grants Program Manager Carol Schimke and Senior Grants Technician Caitlin Amarillas presented. General Manager Ana Ruiz and Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak assisted in answering questions.

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Chair Holman asked whether staff has a map showing the location of the beneficiary wards. She commented that she had reviewed the grantees and identified the beneficiary wards and noticed that the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) was assigned to Ward 5, but should have been assigned to Ward 6 since the project focuses on agriculture and fencing.

Ms. Amarillas responded it was a mistake and she will update the ward. She also clarified that the project would take place at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

Chair Holman asked staff to be more attentive to beneficiary wards since the current sequencing is heavily weighted towards ward 6, which has five projects assigned to it.

Ms. Ruiz asked whether it would be helpful, when presenting to the full Board of Directors (Board), to include in attachment 3 of the staff's report an explanation outlining some of the reasons why certain proposals were not recommended. She noted that perhaps the numerical scores alone make it difficult to fully understand the distinctions, as some proposal received scores that are comparatively high or similar to others that were selected and by including a narrative it could provide clarity on why certain proposals were selected.

Ms. Amarillas responded that attachment 3 can be updated to include that information.

Chair Holman agreed that providing additional information would be helpful. She noted that differences between proposals are not always evident from the scores alone.

Ms. Schimke responded that the strategic review proposed by staff, particularly in terms of beneficiaries or participants, is in line with previous years. Furthermore, she stated that this is the first year staff have shared this data and highlighted where participants and beneficiaries are located. She indicated that it would be helpful to see that information in the context of the last few years to see if there are any trends or patterns. With respect to attachment 3, she explained that among the 30 proposals, often the smallest details were the tiebreaker for which proposal was selected, and staff would need to strike a balance with the amount of information to provide regarding how the review committee reached a determination.

Mr. Jaskulak stated that he would be hesitant to add a narrative that explains why certain proposals were not selected, as this could potentially impact on the applicant's opportunities when applying for other grants. He suggested that it be best to provide a more descriptive explanation of why staff recommended the selected proposals.

Chair Holman agreed with Mr. Jaskulak.

Director Kishimoto commented that the evaluation approach is roughly 50% point based and 50% qualitative and suggested that the cutoff threshold could be set higher to either 80, 85, or 88%.

Mr. Jaskulak responded that this would serve as a lesson learned for next year. He further explained that the Request for Proposals process is not based on selecting the lowest bidder or in this case the highest score, but rather on identifying the proposals that best meet District goals.

Ms. Schimke stated that one key lesson learned that could be implemented in future rounds is to use similar scoring criteria as used by some state agencies where specific points are assigned for

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clearly defined elements. She noted that this approach could reduce subjective interpretation, improve scoring consistency, and minimize extreme outliers.

Chair Holman confirmed that Ms. Amarillas will include a chart that shows past beneficiary wards and noted that the chart would be helpful for both the Board and future applicants in identifying gaps and opportunities across wards. She added that the chart should also include the number of grants that were awarded in each ward.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

Director Kishimoto highlighted the Committee recommendation to include a better explanation of the selection.

Chair Holman added staff should include a bit of the history.

Director Cyr also requested that a map be included.

Ms. Amarillas confirmed that she will include a map along with a table.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Chair Holman seconded the motion to approve and forward the list of recommended grant awards for the 2025 Grantmaking Program, for a total of \$313,983, to the full Board of Directors for approval.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

4. Update to Board Policy 5.01 – Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition (R-26-47)

Public Affairs Manager Lori Low presented. Volunteer Program Manager Jennifer Williams, General Manager Ana Ruiz, and Assistant General Manager Brian Malone assisted in answering questions.

Director Kishimoto commented that she is leaning more towards a 20 years of service threshold rather than 25 years.

Chair Holman commented that she is also leaning towards a 20 year threshold, noting that it is more achievable than 25 years of service while still exhibiting a great deal of commitment and dedication. She also suggested a small increase to the threshold for the number of volunteers hours donated.

Director Kishimoto stated that she is supportive of a 20 year service threshold and keeping it at the 500 hours level, noting that the dedication period is limited to a ten-year term.

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Director Cyr also expressed support for the 20 year service threshold. In addition, he requested to know where the current commemorative benches are located and the total number of general benches.

Ms. Ruiz responded that staff will identify the commemorative benches and provide a count.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

Director Kishimoto asked how many benches exist overall.

Mr. Malone responded that staff would need to confirm the number.

Director Kishimoto requested that the total number of benches be included in the staff's report when it is presented to the full Board.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Chair Holman seconded the motion to approve an update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* regarding special recognition eligibility for bench dedications with the following modifications:

1. Change the 25 years of service to 20 years; and
2. Staff to re-evaluate potentially increasing the 500-hour requirement to 600 or 650 hours or provide an analysis of why 500 hours is recommended.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

5. Legislative Positions for Consideration by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (R-26-48)

Governmental Affairs Program Manager Joshua Hugg presented.

Director Kishimoto noted that staff slide #3 lists SB 1135 as authored by Becker, but the staff report identifies the author as Senator Blake Speier.

Mr. Hugg responded that it was a mistake and confirmed that SB 1135 was authored by Senator Blake Speier.

Director Kishimoto asked if SB 1268 could be elevated from a priority two to a priority one.

Mr. Hugg stated that the District can serve in a supportive role as there are other groups already supporting the bill, but the District would not be in a position to take a leadership role.

Director Kishimoto recommended moving SB 1268 to a priority one and asked if staff had any issues with moving it.

Mr. Hugg responded that the difficulty in raising the priority is solely due to staff capacity.

Chair Holman asked what could be done to address staff capacity if SB 1268 was elevated to a priority one.

Mr. Hugg stated that staff would conduct targeted outreach to specific delegation members on the relevant committee with whom the District has relationships, making explicit asks and effectively working the phones as it goes through, and noted that the bill analysis does have a long list of supporters.

Chair Holman commented that she would rather prioritize staff's energy to AB 2513 and elevate it to a priority one. She emphasized that she does support SB 1268 but there is already broad support for this bill.

Director Kishimoto noted that she understood the reasoning to elevate AB 2513 to a priority one since SB 1268 does have broad support and supports elevating AB 2513 to a priority one.

Public comment period opened.

The following person provided comments:

- Kristi Corley

Public comment period closed.

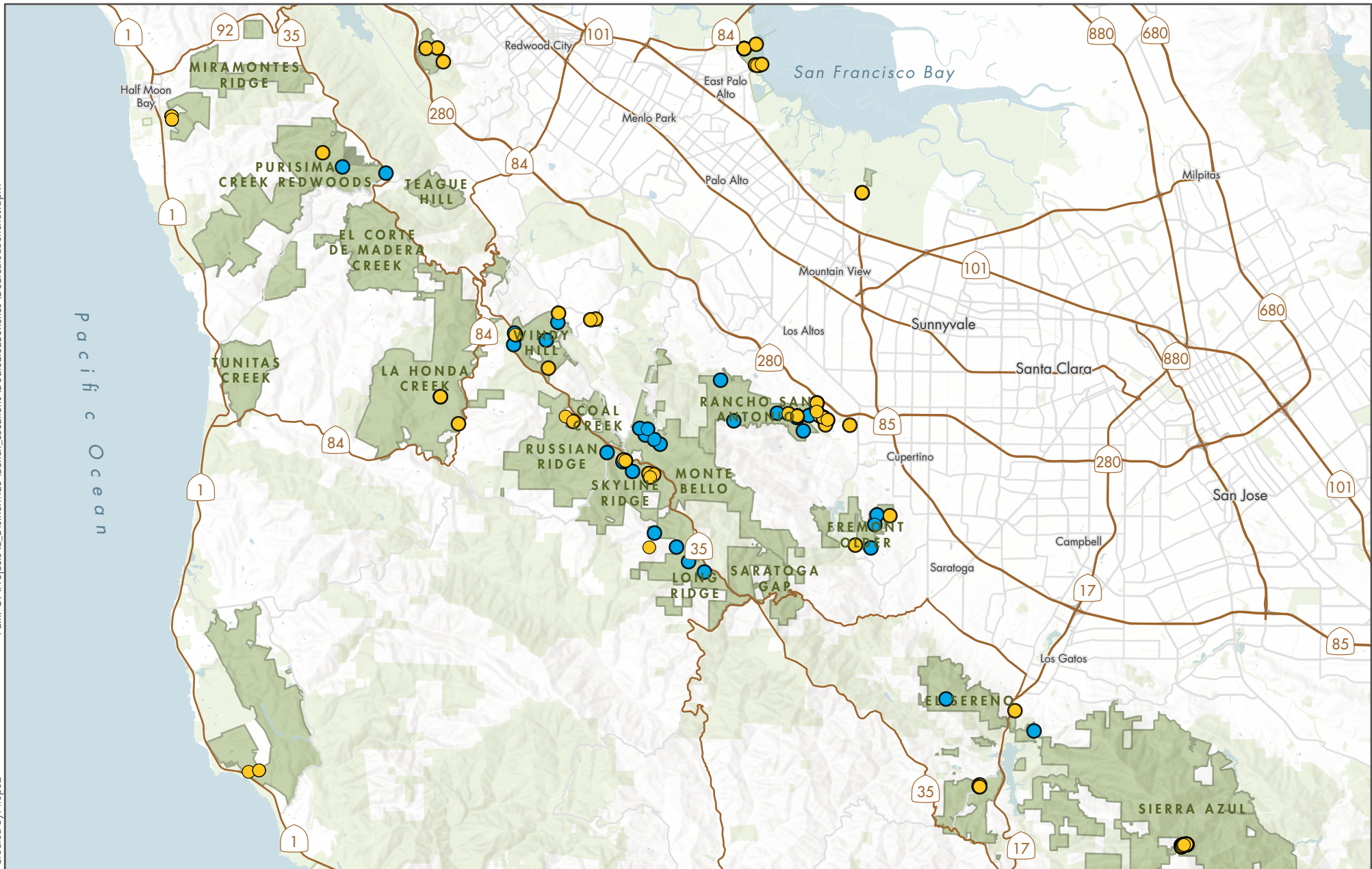
Chair Holman confirmed that there were no objections for the Committee elevating AB 2513 to a priority one bill, and the Committee concurred.

No Committee action required.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting of the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee at 4:09 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC
District Clerk



District Benches

- Midpen preserves
- Other protected lands
- Bench (Dedicated)
- Bench (Not dedicated or unknown)

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