



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-84
Meeting 25-18
June 25, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Selection of trail names and use designations for four La Honda Phase II trail segments in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

As unanimously affirmed by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee:

1. Name new trail segments in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve as follows:
 - Segment 1 – Lonely Forest Trail
 - Segment 2 – Lone Madrone Trail
 - Segment 3 – Western Meadowlark Trail
 - Segment 4 – Coho Vista Trail
2. Designate the following uses for the new trail segments:
 - Segment 1 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - Segment 2 – Hikers and Equestrians, No Dogs
 - Segment 3 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - Segment 4 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - All trails – On-trail use only
 - Redesignate an approximately 0.9-mile segment of Harrington Creek Trail between the Sears Ranch Parking Area and Segment 1 as Multi-Use

COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action Plan & Budget (ABC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ward 1 – Craig Gleason |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative, Funding & Public Affairs (LFPAC) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward 2 – Yoriko Kishimoto (absent) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning & Natural Resources (PNR) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ward 3 – Jed Cyr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Real Property | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward 4 – Curt Riffle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ad-Hoc Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Ward 5 – Karen Holman |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Ward 6 – Margaret MacNiven |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward 7 – Zoe Kersteen-Tucker |

COMMITTEE ACTION

Date: April 15, 2025

Action: Review and affirmation of the General Manager's Recommendations

Item: La Honda Phase II Trail Naming and Use Designation

COMMENTS

PNR reviewed and affirmed the following trail names and use designations.

1. Name new trail segments in La Honda with the following names:

- Segment 1 – Lonely Forest Trail
- Segment 2 – Lone Madrone Trail
- Segment 3 – Meadowlark Trail
- Segment 4 – Coho Vista Trail

2. Designate the following uses for the new trail segments:

- Segment 1 – Multi-use, No Dogs
- Segment 2 – Hikers and Equestrians, No Dogs
- Segment 3 – Multi-use, No Dogs
- Segment 4 – Multi-use, No Dogs
- All trails – On-trail use only
- Redesignate a 0.9-mile segment of Harrington Creek Trail between the Sears Ranch Parking Area and Segment 1 as Multi-Use

Due to public comment raised regarding possible confusion because of the existing Meadowlark Trail in Arastradero Preserve (City of Palo Alto) with a similar name, PNR made a minor alteration to the name of Segment 3 from Meadowlark Trail to Western Meadowlark Trail as recommended during the meeting by Natural Resources Staff.

With the minor trail name adjustment to Segment 3, the PNR voted to approve the General Manager's recommendation unanimously.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. April 15, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Report (R-25-47)
- B. April 15, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-25-47
April 15, 2025

REVISED AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Selection of trail names and use designations for four La Honda Phase II trail segments in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Forward the following recommendations to the full Board of Directors for their review and consideration:

1. Name new trail segments in La Honda with the following names:
 - Segment 1 – Lonely Forest Trail
 - Segment 2 – Lone Madrone Trail
 - Segment 3 – Meadowlark Trail
 - Segment 4 – Coho Vista Trail
2. Designate the following uses for the new trail segments:
 - Segment 1 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - Segment 2 – Hikers and Equestrians, No Dogs
 - Segment 3 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - Segment 4 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - All trails – on-trail use only
 - Redesignate an approximately 0.9-mile segment of Harrington Creek Trail between the Sears Ranch Parking Area and Segment 1 as Multi-Use

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is preparing to open the Phase II area of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (Preserve) to the public in the Fall of 2025. The map showing the location of each of the four new trail segments is included as Attachment 1: Trail Segment Map. The proposed trail names are consistent with the naming criteria specified in Board Policy 5.01, Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition (Attachment 2). Pending Board approval, trail names and use designations will be implemented through new trail signs and updated Preserve maps. The mileage and trail segment alignments will be added to the District's internal GIS data.

Table 1 – Trail Segment Information

SEGMENT	APPROX. LENGTH	PROPOSED NAME	USE DESIGNATION
1 (LIGHT BLUE)	2.53 MI	Lonely Forest Trail	Multi-use, no dogs
2 (YELLOW SECTION)	1.24 MI	Lone Madrone Trail	Hikers and equestrians only, no dogs
3 (PINK SECTION)	1.04 MI	Meadowlark Trail	Multi-use, no dogs
4 (PURPLE SECTION)	1.01 MI	Coho Vista Trail	Multi-use, no dogs

DISCUSSION

The District Board of Directors (Board) certified the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and approved the Master Plan for La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (Master Plan) in 2012. The MND covered all planned phases of opening the Preserve to public access. Phase I actions involved the designation of Conservation Management Units (CMUs), implementation of infrastructure improvements for grazing, and the first phase of trail improvements. Phase II includes watershed restoration efforts, construction of the Sears Ranch Road parking lot and Allen Road permit parking lot and opening of trails to the public.

The trails in the Phase II effort are comprised of approximately 5.8 miles of trail from mainly existing and rehabilitated roads and some areas of new trails. The trails are proposed in four segments, as detailed in Table 1.

Trail Names

Segment 1

The proposed name for this segment is Lonely Forest Trail. This segment will be passing through an isolated and quiet redwood forest, then will proceed through designated conservation grazing areas. This segment will connect to the existing Harrington Creek Trail. This name complies with the botanical component of the naming policy.

Segment 2

The proposed name for this segment is Lone Madrone Trail, this segment is a part of the Lone Madrone Conservation Grazing Unit. This segment contains a Pacific Madrone Tree (*Arbutus menziesii*) that stands alone in the area. This name complies with the botanical component of the naming policy.

Segment 3

The proposed name for this segment is Meadowlark Trail. This trail is named after the Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), which is a sandy brown-color bird with long legs and yellow

highlights that can be seen throughout the open grasslands of this area. This name complies with the zoological component of the naming policy.

Segment 4

The proposed name for this segment is Coho Vista Trail. This segment will connect to the existing Coho Vista Trail. This name complies with the zoological component of the naming policy.

Use Designation

The Master Plan proposed a multi-use trail (open to hikers, equestrians, and bicycles) in the central part of the preserve on what is now Segments 1, 3, ~~and 4~~, and the Harrington Creek Trail from the Sears Ranch Road parking lot to segment 1. The Harrington Creek Trail is currently only open to hikers and equestrians because of the previous lack of connection to longer multi-use trails. The segment that is proposed for redesignation to allow bikes is approximately 0.9 mile and stretches between the Sears Ranch Parking area and trailhead and Segment 1. The Phase II trail segments generally follow the conceptual trail route shown in the Master Plan, but the exact trail alignment has been refined due to on-site environmental and site considerations. The eastern side of the loop trail (Segment 2) was proposed to be open to hikers and equestrians only. The part of Coho Vista Trail north of Segment 4 calls for on-leash dog uses to the vista point, but not beyond it. Segment 4 would be closed to dogs. The Master Plan allows off-trail hiking except in CMUs, which excludes Segment 2.

Though the Master Plan allows off-trail hiking everywhere except for Segment 2, the General Manager recommends that only on-trail hiking should be allowed in the Phase II area due to the presence of badgers, mountain lions, and conservation grazing in order to minimize disturbance. Studies conducted by the Natural Resource Department indicate that Segments 2 and 3, located within the central portion of the loop trail, represent high value habitat for badgers and mountain lions. A memo summarizing the studies (Attachment 3) has shown not only the presence and prevalence of these species in this area, but also their sensitivity to human disturbance. By keeping all visitors on the trail, disturbance to sensitive species is minimized. Additionally, conservation grazing is ongoing in proximity to Segments 1, 2, and 3. Mother cows can be protective of their young, especially during calving season and existing signage warns visitors not to approach or touch cattle. To further limit hikers' potential disruption of cattle and ranching operations, on-trail use is recommended for all segments.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

August 22, 2012 - The Board certified the Mitigated Negative Declaration and approved the La Honda Creek Master Plan on August 22, 2012 ([R-12-83](#), [Minutes](#)). The Project is part of implementing Phase II of the Master Plan for constructing and opening trails for public access.

February 9, 2022 - The Board authorized a multi-year contract with AECOM Technical Services Inc. to support multiple projects including the La Honda Phase II Trail Connections project ([R-22-15](#), [Minutes](#))

April 27, 2022 - The General Manager authorized a multi-year professional services contract with Timothy C. Best CEG to provide professional services for design and construction oversight for La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Phase II Trails ([R-22-52](#), [Minutes](#)).

February 8, 2023 - The General Manager executed a contract amendment with AECOM Technical Services, Inc., providing additional botanical services necessary to complete the La Honda Creek Phase II Trail Connections project ([R-23-18](#), [Minutes](#)).

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact. All signage will be funded from the existing La Honda Phase II project and the District's Signage budgets.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Additional notice was sent to the La Honda Interested Parties list.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The Board's selection of a trail name is not a Project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Board approved Master Plan IS/MND considered the installation of trail signs and opening the trails to public use as part of its analysis. No further CEQA review is required.

NEXT STEPS

Follow Committee consideration, the General Manager will forward the recommended trail names to the full Board for consideration and approval. The following tentative schedule is planned for the naming and development process.

Tentative Date	Action
June 2025	Board of Directors Meeting
July 2025	Signage Design
August 2025	Sign Fabrication
August 2025	Sign Delivery
September 2025	Sign Installation
Fall 2025	Trails open to the Public

ATTACHMENTS

1. Trail Segment Map
2. Policy 5.01 Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition Policy
3. Memo: La Honda Creek Phase II Trail Recommendations Regarding American Badger and Mountain Lion Habitat

Responsible Department Head:
Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Department

Prepared by/Contact person

Mattea Ottoboni, Planner II, Planning Department

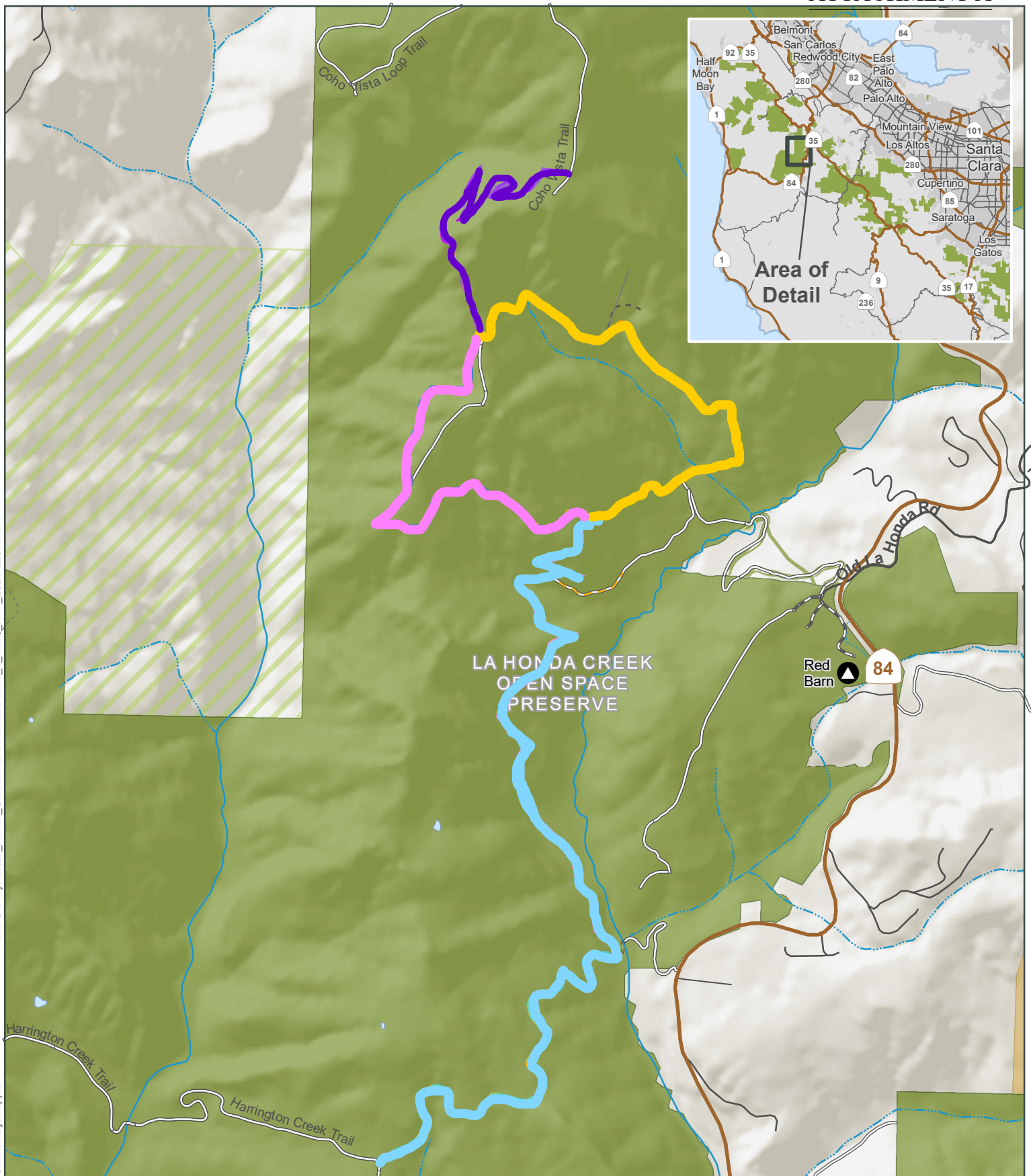
Alyssa Cano, Planner I, Planning Department

Graphics prepared by:

Alyssa Cano, Planner I, Planning Department

Path: G:\Projects\La Honda_Creek\Phase II Trails_RFP_20211220.mxd

Created By: bappler



La Honda Creek Phase II Trails

- New Trail Construction - 1.57 miles
- Improvements to Existing Roads & Trails - Approx. 3.9 miles
- Road Removal/Restoration - 0.2 mile

- Segment 1
- Segment 2
- Segment 3
- Segment 4
To be a continuation of Coho Vista Trail

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/2/2024



Miles

 0 0.175 0.35

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition	Policy 5.01 Chapter 5 – Historical/Cultural
Effective Date: 8/25/93	Revised Date: 5 /24/23
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, 12/12/18	

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 \$1,999.99	Thank you by email or letter
\$2,000 to \$4,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of District gift item (note cards, etc.)
\$5,000 to \$9,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of framed photograph of favorite District preserve
\$10,000 or more*	Thank you by email or letter with offer of Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication
*These items will be provided only if desired by the donor	
All gifts will be recognized annually on the District website.	

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.

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.

VI. PARTNER RECOGNITION SIGNBOARD

Partner recognition signboards provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and acknowledge significant partners who have made conspicuous or noteworthy contributions of cash, land, and/or time that were instrumental to the conservation, restoration, management, and/or public opening of a preserve. Partners may include agencies, organizations, or individuals. Partner Recognition Signboards may also be used to satisfy recognition requirements specified in grant, purchase, or other funding agreements.

Excluding recognitions previously approved by the Board (e.g. recognitions required in Board-approved agreements and resolutions), LFPAC shall review and forward for Board approval the list of partner(s) to recognize on the Partner Recognition Signboard. Following Board approval, the General Manager or his/her designee will follow the guidelines and specifications listed below.

a. Guidelines and Specifications:

- a) Partner Recognition Signboards shall be standalone signboards that follow the same design specifications as the District's standard trailhead signboards to maintain District branding and visual cohesiveness.
- b) Partner Recognition Signboards shall normally be placed directly adjacent to existing preserve signboards to consolidate trailhead information and signboard placement.
- c) Recognition content shall include logos and/or names.
- d) The District will review recognition content with each partner for accuracy and completeness.
- e) The General Manager or his/her designee will approve the final recognition content.
- f) Exceptions to these guidelines and specifications will be forwarded to LFPAC for review and to the full Board for consideration of approval.



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: April 15, 2025

MEMO TO: Mattea Ottoboni, Planner II, Planning Department
Alyssa Cano, Planner I, Planning Department

FROM: Matt Sharp Chaney, Resource Management Specialist II
Karine Tokatlian, Resource Management Specialist II

SUBJECT: La Honda Creek Phase II Trail Recommendations Regarding American Badger and Mountain Lion Habitat

Background:

Recent wildlife movement and habitat suitability data for American badger (California state species of special concern), and mountain lion (candidate Threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act within the Santa Cruz Mountains) has been made available to the Natural Resources Department that offers valuable insights into the development and use designation of the La Honda Creek Phase II Trail Project. The La Honda Creek Master Plan includes the goals to protect unique and sensitive resources, protect native wildlife populations, and enhance recreational opportunities in the preserve.

Potential for Species Impacts:

American Badger:

Midpen hired Pathways for Wildlife and the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory to perform an American Badger and Burrowing Owl Habitat Suitability Assessment (Study) in 2019. The Study was completed in 2022 and found that six Open Space Preserves (OSPs) in the Skyline area support more than 50% of badger occurrences in the peninsula: Monte Bello, Russian Ridge, Long Ridge, Skyline Ridge, Windy Hill, and La Honda Creek OSPs (Diamond, et al. 2022). Badger burrows, successful hair samples, and individuals caught on wildlife camera images were consistently found in La Honda Creek OSP pastures 3 and 4 (Figure 2), indicating that the area provides high quality habitat for badgers. The Study's genetic analysis identified multiple individual badgers with different levels of genetic relatedness in pasture 4. It also identified one individual female badger in multiple locations within pastures 3 and 4, confirming that the area is used consistently and across seasons (Figure 3). All of these findings lead the authors and Midpen project team to identify the Skyline area preserves, and pastures 3 and 4 in La Honda Creek OSP, as core areas for American Badger in San Mateo County.

Since 2022, Midpen has been opportunistically monitoring badger activity in these core areas and collecting hair samples to continue genetic analysis. A concentrated effort in July 2024 was concerningly unsuccessful. Biologists found zero badger activity in the majority of areas previously identified as core, good quality habitat (e.g. Russian Ridge, Windy Hill, Long Ridge OSPs). Pastures 3 and 4 in La Honda were the one of the exceptions where recent badger activity was found.

There is still a lack of regional badger data to confirm whether these population trends reflect normal ecological movement across large territories or a more concerning decline in species distribution and numbers. One of the most significant inferences from these findings is the possibility that it is an early indication of a badger population decline. Since 2024, Midpen has been rigorously building regional awareness and support for badger conservation management, monitoring and research. While there is strong interest and commitment from partner agencies, the effort will take time and during the interim, Midpen should consider a cautious approach when planning land use decisions in important badger habitats.

American badgers require unimpeded and unfragmented landscapes to move. They have large, variable home ranges sometimes ranging from 2.4 – 541 square-km (Quinn, 2008). Home range size is influenced by prey availability, soil quality, suitable habitat availability and minimal disturbance. More suitable conditions allow badgers to move smaller distances and decrease the risk of meeting potential threats and lethal barriers like roadways. Therefore, when good quality badger habitat is identified, like that found in La Honda pastures 3 and 4, it should be protected to prevent undue stress and burden on individuals.

Published and robust data that capture badger-human interactions are lacking but badger experts report that badgers avoid humans and dogs, and are unlikely to be aggressive toward humans and dogs unless the badger felt threatened (personal communication, 2025).

Mountain Lion:

The majority of undeveloped areas within the Santa Cruz Mountains contain high quality mountain lion habitat. Mountain lion activity is regularly documented in all Midpen preserves with the exception of coastal bayside habitat at Ravenswood and the Stevens Creek Nature Center. The mountain lion population in the Central Coast North Evolutionarily Significant Unit, which includes the Santa Cruz Mountains is thought to support 33-66 adult mountain lions. This number is consistent with the amount of available mountain lion habitat in the areas indicating the number of mountain lions within the ESU is normal, however, the population suffers from poor genetic diversity due to a lack of connectivity to neighboring populations (Gustafson et al, 2018).

There are several existing examples of published literature that have shown that human recreation impacts mountain lion behavior. Some substantial findings include:

- Mountain lions will alter their behavior to avoid human presence in response to human sounds (Baker and Leberg, 2018, Suraci et al. 2019)
- Mountain lions are averse to human modifications including trails and roads (Baker and Leberg 2018, Townsend et al. 2020, Lewis et al. 2021)
- Mountain lions prefer to select den sites ~2000' or greater from developed areas (Wilmers et al. 2013)

Midpen is currently partnered with the Santa Cruz Puma Project (SCPP) on a Human/Mountain Lion Interaction Research Project that involves collaring mountain lions throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains to better understand mountain lion movement and habitat use as well as factors that influence mountain lion behavior and interactions between people and mountain lions. This research includes collaring mountain lions in coastal San Mateo County, an area that SCPP had not previously focused their collaring efforts. The study began in 2020, and we are currently starting the fifth year of this five-year study and are in the early stages of data analysis. SCPP is drafting a pending publication (Morgan, et al. 2025) detailing changes in mountain lion behavior in response to recreational trail use. Preliminary findings indicate a strong temporal avoidance of recreational trails similar in intensity to mountain lion avoidance of developed urban areas. Mountain lions tend to avoid areas with recreational trails during daylight hours, when trails are in use, and shift towards nocturnal use of these areas. This temporal avoidance reduces habitat suitability in proximity to trails and limits opportunities for essential needs including hunting and denning.

To date, SCPP have collared 34 unique individual mountain lions since the research project's inception. Four of these mountain lions have home ranges that include La Honda Creek OSP (35M, 46M, 56M, and 144M). GPS accelerometer data shows that each of these four individuals utilized habitat within central La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve with 144M and 56M frequenting the "Bathtub Loop" area (see Figures 1 & 2). These newly available data indicate that central La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, and the "Bathtub Loop" area are important corridors for mountain lion movement. Unfortunately, no female mountain lions utilizing La Honda Creek OSP have been collared, meaning we do not have data on den site selection in the area. However, research has shown that mountain lions typically use remote habitat with low levels of human disturbance and development for reproductive behaviors, including establishing den sites (Wilmers et al. 2013, Yovovich et al. 2020).

Dellinger et al. 2020 produced a mountain lion habitat suitability model based on summer habitat selection by collared mountain lions throughout the state of California (Figure 6). These data indicate that the northern section of trail segment 2 runs through, or adjacent to, habitat with a high probability of mountain lion habitat use. This aligns well with the previously mentioned collar data. This model was intended to provide data to land managers and policy makers to inform decisions relating to habitat connectivity for mountain lions.

Alternatives:

The Natural Resources department recommends taking this recently obtained ecological data into account when determining trail use designations for the La Honda Phase II Trails Project. The La Honda Creek Master Plan (Master Plan) identifies segments 1, 3 and 4 as a multiuse trail including bicycles and segment 2 as hiking and equestrian use, but staff have also been exploring alternatives for the bicycle loop included in the Master Plan near Sears Ranch Road that was not developed due to natural resource concerns. To balance the public access and natural resource goals of the La Honda Master Plan consideration should be given to limiting public access within Trail Segment 2 of the "Bathtub Loop" to hiking and equestrian use only as identified in the Master Plan. In addition, we recommend on-trail use only in trail segments 1-4. This would limit the intensity of trail, and off trail, use within an identified corridor for both American badger and mountain lions, thereby protecting their populations within the high-quality habitat found in La Honda Creek OSP.

Monitoring:

The [La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration](#) identifies La Honda Creek OSP as a wildlife corridor for deer, mountain lion, and other wildlife. The ISMND also explains that wildlife corridors shall be identified through research and surveys and appropriately protected as specified under the Master Plan. Staff will continue to monitor these species to identify any trends in local populations.

Figures:

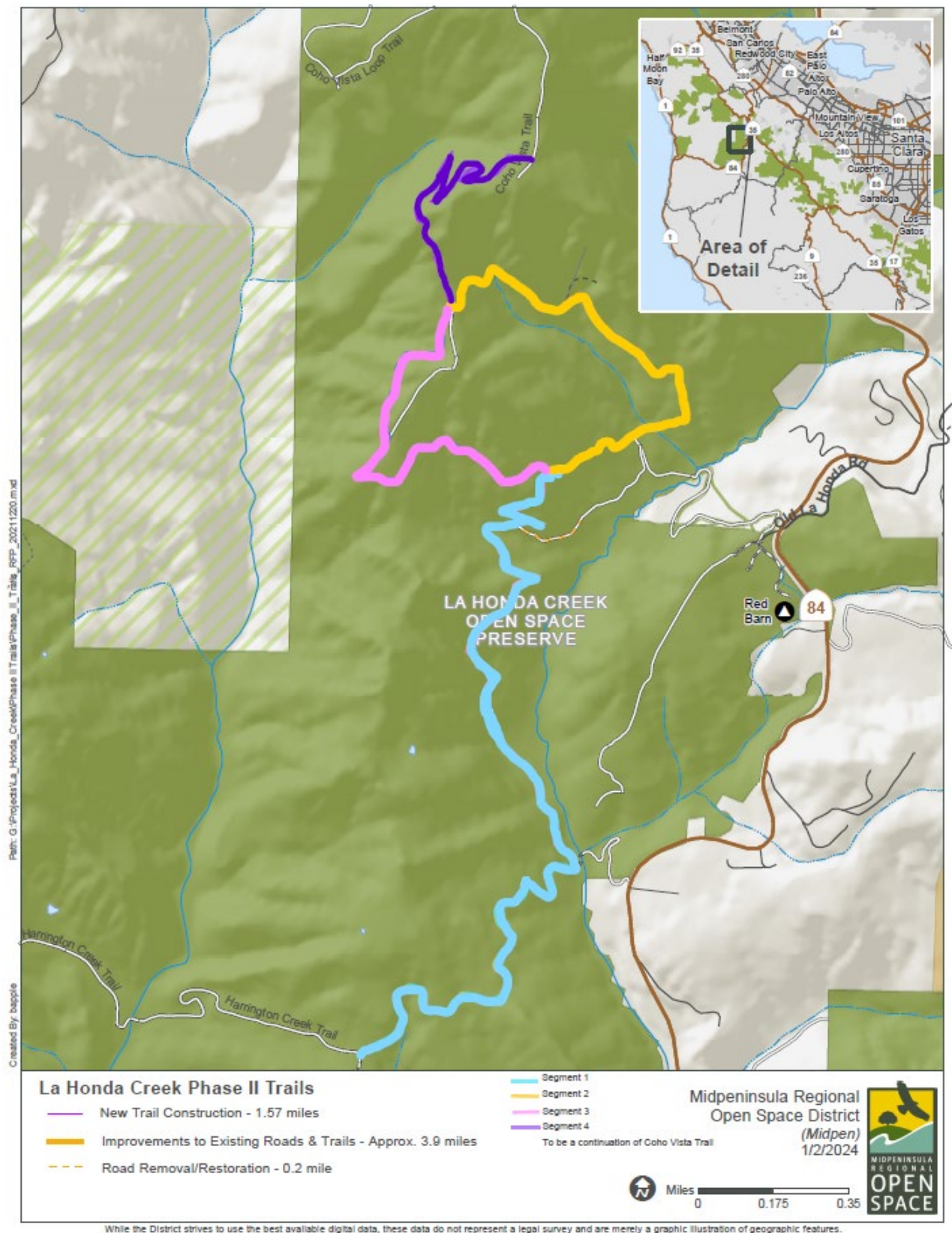


Figure 1 Phase II Trails Map

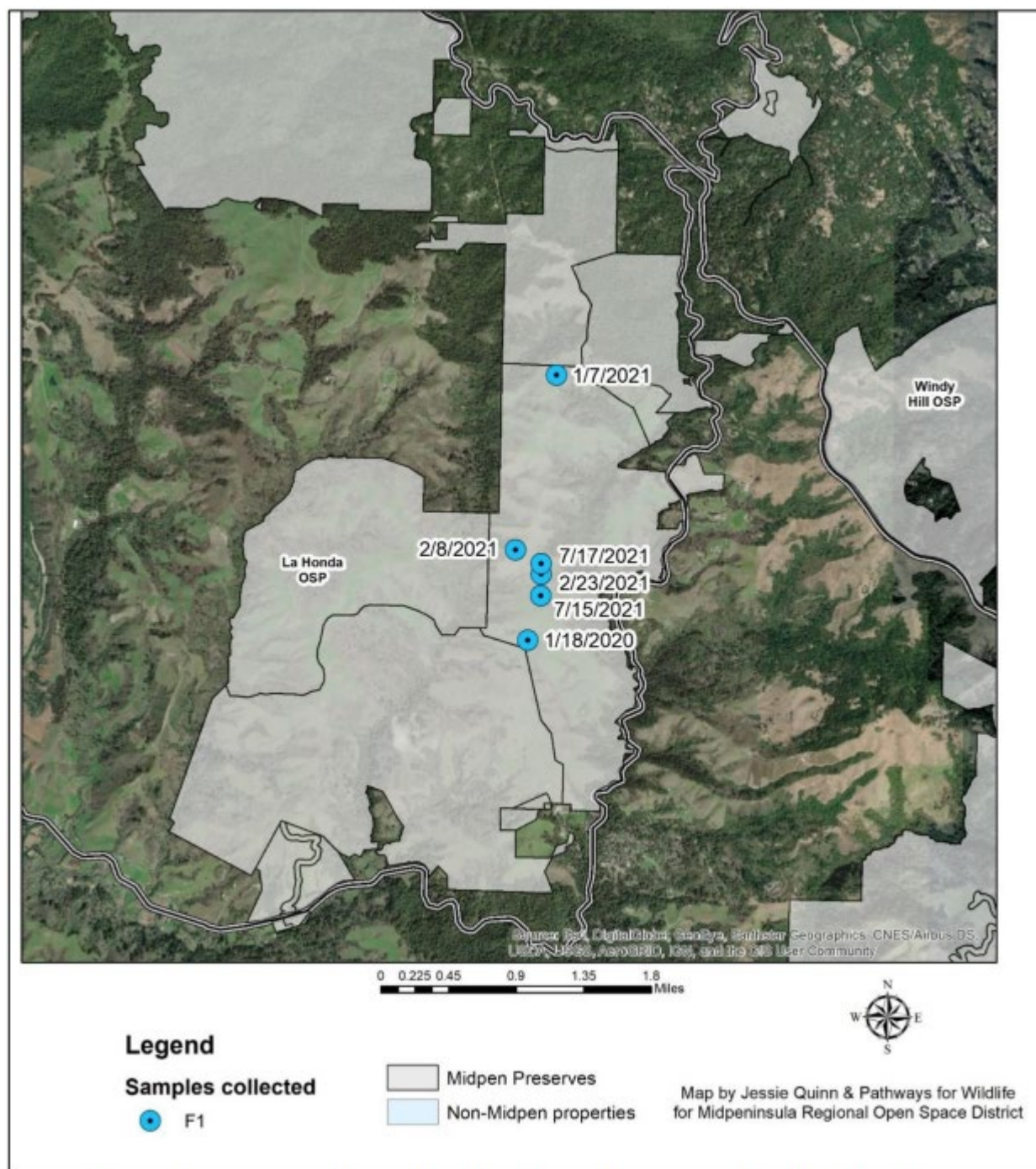


Figure 5-7. Locations and dates of samples collected from badgers F1 at La Honda OSP.

Figure 2: American Badger Sample Collection Map

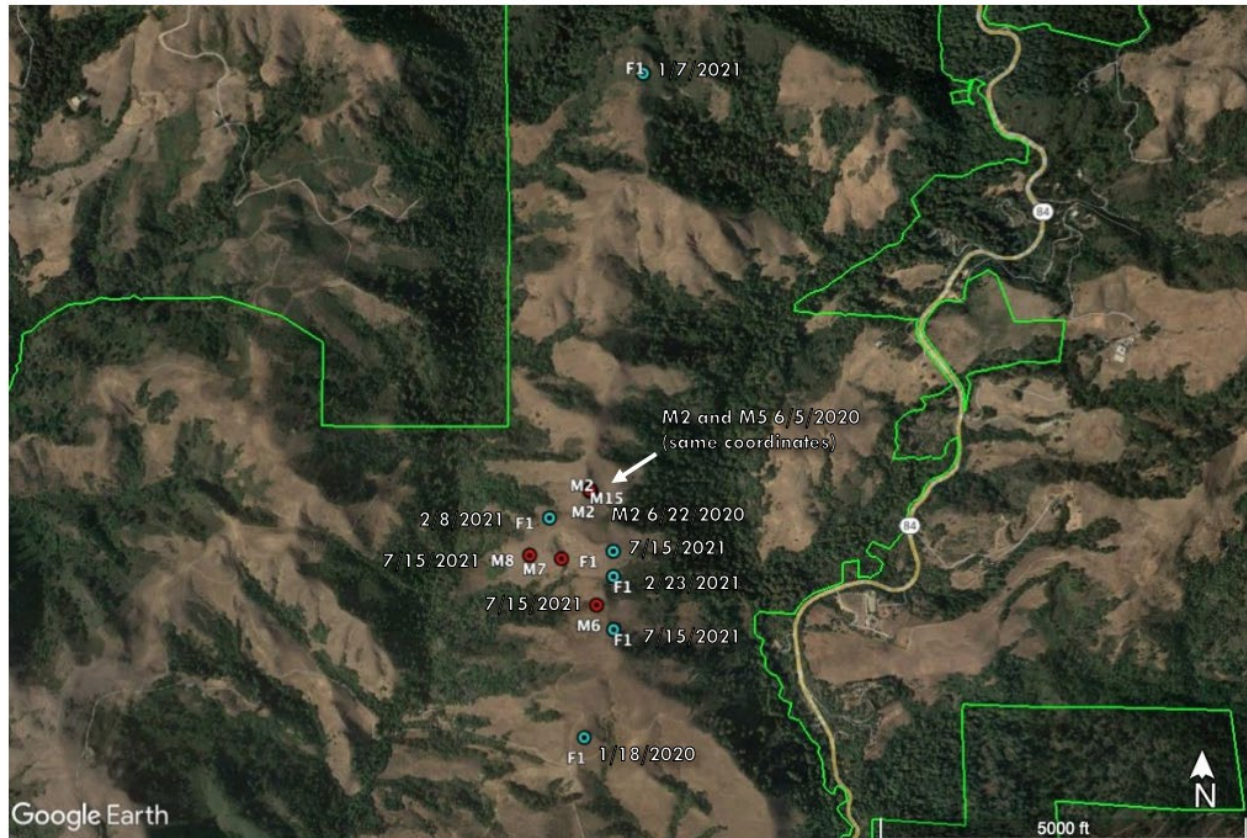


Figure 5-8. Sample locations of 6 badgers at La Honda Creek OSP collected between January 18, 2020, and July 15, 2021.

Figure 3: American Badger Sample Collection 1/2020 & 7/2021

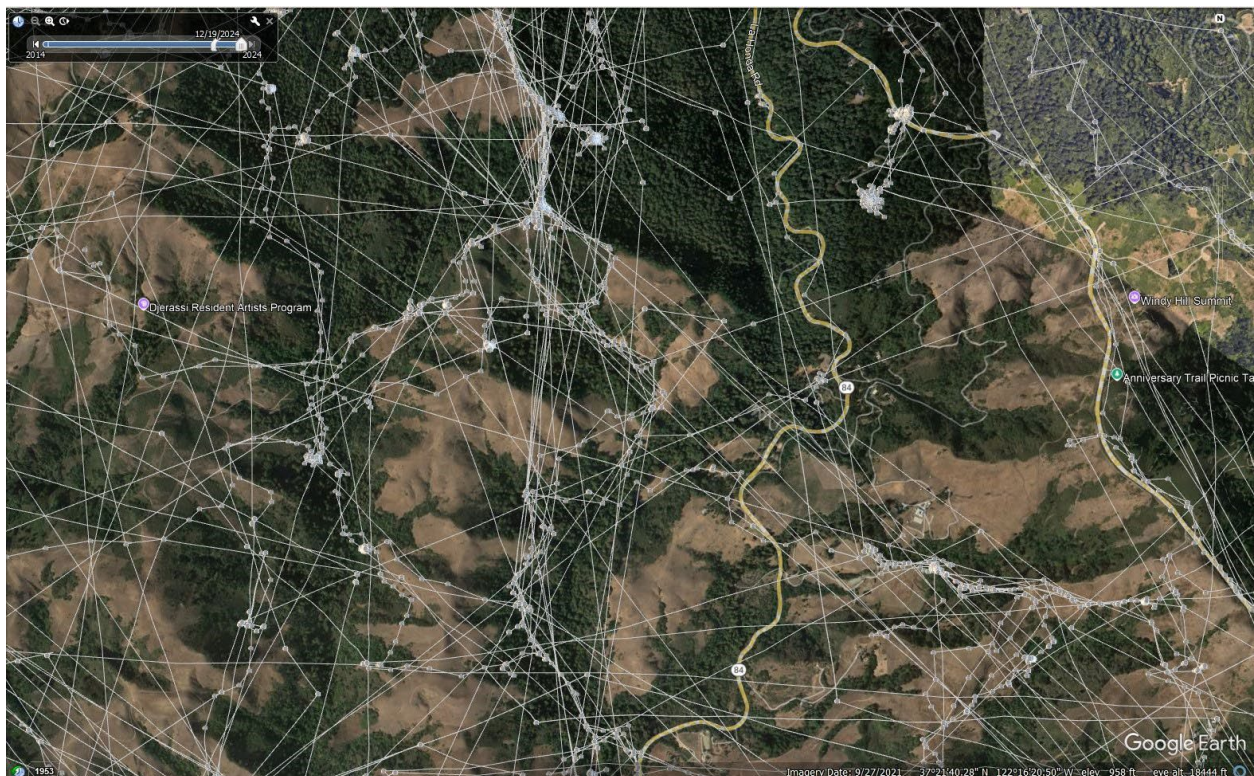


Figure 4: 144M Collar Data



Figure 5: 56M Collar Data

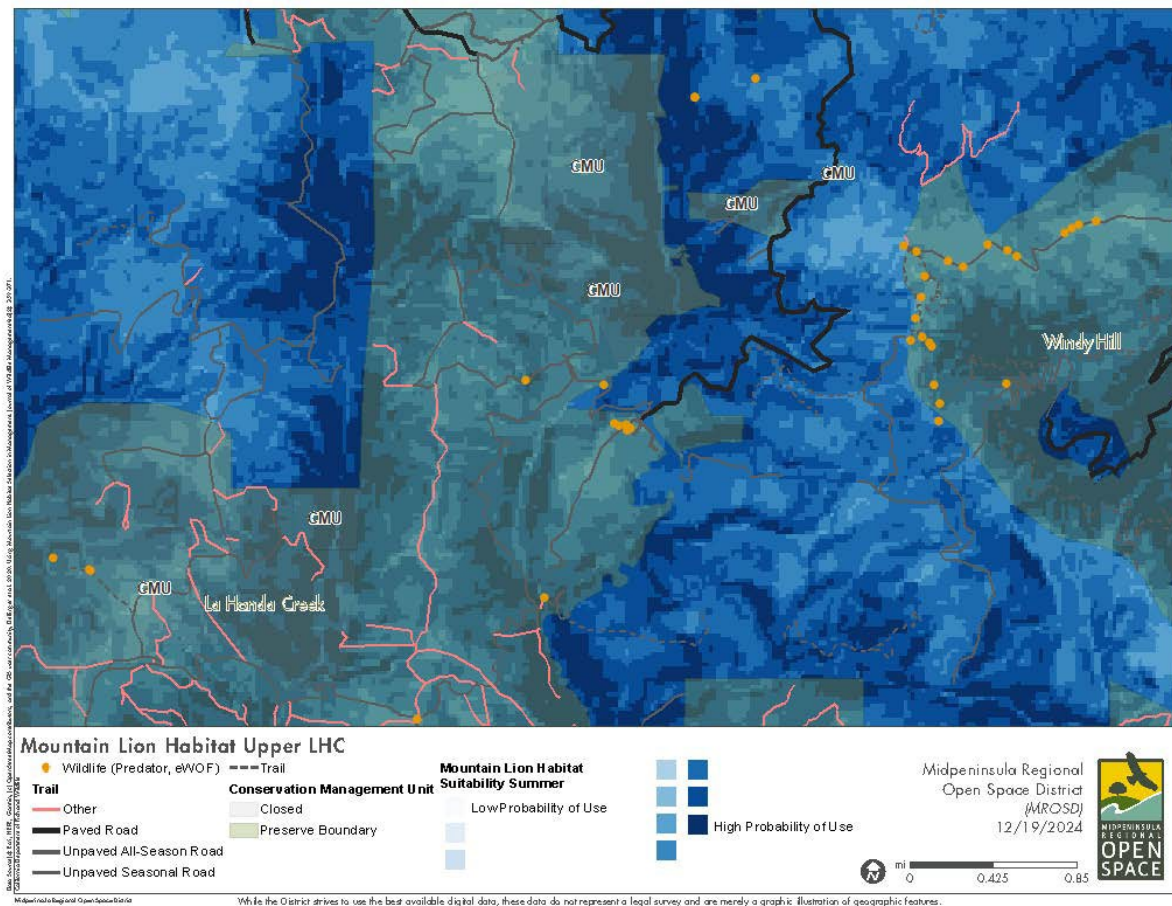


Figure 6: Mountain Lion Summer Habitat Suitability Map with eWOF Mountain Lion Observations

Literature Cited:

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Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Administrative Office
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

APPROVED MINUTES*

CALL TO ORDER

Director Kersteen-Tucker called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 1:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Curt Riffle and Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

Members absent: Yoriko Kishimoto

Staff present: General Manager Ana 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, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Stephanie Gross, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Planner II Mattea Ottoboni, Planner I Alyssa Cano, Resource Management Specialist II Matthew Sharp-Chaney, Capital Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple, and Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Barresi

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-0-0 (Absent Director Kishimoto)

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Deputy District Clerk Stephanie Gross reported there were no public speakers for this item.

* Approved by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee on April 29, 2025.

**Planning and Natural Resources Committee
April 15, 2025**

Page 2

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Select Committee Chair for 2025 Calendar Year

Director Kersteen-Tucker nominated Director Riffle to serve as the Committee Chair for calendar year 2025.

Director Riffle accepted the nomination.

Public comment opened at 1:02 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:02 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to select Director Riffle as Committee Chair for Calendar Year 2025.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-0-0 (Absent Director Kishimoto)

2. Approve the January 8, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Public comment opened at 1:03 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:03 p.m.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Chair Riffle seconded the motion to approve the January 8, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-0-0 (Absent Director Kishimoto)

3. Selection of trail names and use designations for four La Honda Phase II trail segments in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (R-25-47)

Planner II Mattea Ottoboni and Planner I Alyssa Cano presented. Planning Manager Jane Mark, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Resource Management Specialist II Matthew Sharp-Chaney, Capital Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple, and Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Barresi assisted in answering Committee questions.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that residents of the La Honda Creek area have expressed interest in more dog access trails and suggested that it would be helpful to articulate the reasons why dog access is limited and the impacts on wildlife.

Chair Riffle agreed and reiterated that this issue is not solely due to grazing.

**Planning and Natural Resources Committee
April 15, 2025**

Page 3

Director Kersteen-Tucker noted that a public comment had been submitted pointing out there is already a trail named Meadowlark Trail in the City of Palo Alto's Arastradero Open Space Preserve and asked whether this might cause any confusion.

Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Barresi explained that because the trails are located in different counties, it is less of a safety concern, as separate emergency response dispatchers are involved.

Ms. Ottoboni suggested naming the trail the "Western" Meadowlark Trail to avoid any confusion noting that the name is both zoologically and geographically correct.

Director Kersteen-Tucker and Chair Riffle concurred adding "Western" to the Meadowlark Trail name.

Public comment opened at 1:46 p.m.

The following people provided comments:

- Mike Bushue
- Susan Dunn

Public comment closed at 1:55 p.m.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested that staff meet with Ms. Dunn to address her inquiry if the District would consider having a default trail use only policy rather than a default open space access policy and provide her with the District policies.

Planning Manager Jane Mark offered to meet with Ms. Dunn.

Director Kersteen-Tucker also emphasized the importance of explaining to the public the reason for restricting dog access due to the natural resource implications of the trail's design and the need to be mindful of the local wildlife.

Chair Riffle agreed with Director Kersteen-Tucker about the importance of the public understanding why dogs are not allowed and also explaining why there are no bikes allowed in Segment 2.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Riffle seconded the motion as amended to approve the motion to forward the following recommendations to the full Board of Directors for their review and consideration:

1. Name new trail segments in La Honda with the following names:
 - Segment 1 – Lonely Forest Trail
 - Segment 2 – Lone Madrone Trail
 - Segment 3 – Western Meadowlark Trail
 - Segment 4 – Coho Vista Trail
2. Designate the following uses for the new trail segments:
 - Segment 1 – Multi-use, No Dogs
 - Segment 2 – Hikers and Equestrians, No Dogs

**Planning and Natural Resources Committee
April 15, 2025**

Page 4

- Segment 3 – Multi-use, No Dogs
- Segment 4 – Multi-use, No Dogs
- All trails – on-trail use only
- Redesignate an approximately 0.9-mile segment of Harrington Creek Trail between the Sears Ranch Parking Area and Segment 1 as Multi-Use

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-0-0 (Absent Director Kishimoto)

3. Incorporation of a Legacy Road as a Trail, Approval of a New Trail Extension, and Renaming of an Existing Trail at Thornewood Open Space Preserve (R-25-48)

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone presented.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked whether historical photos would be incorporated into the area, noting that the site's history is interesting.

Mr. Malone stated that the standard District signage format will be used for the trails signs but also interpretive signage to highlight the estate area.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested also adding QR codes to the signs to provide access to additional information.

Chair Riffle commented that his preference would be to allow equestrians to be able to use the trail all the way to the top of the trail, but understood that it would mean the removal of the redwood trees over the trail.

Mr. Malone stated that it is the Board decision to opt to remove the fallen trees.

Public comment opened at 2:27 p.m.

Mr. Bushue requested the addition of a tie rack for horses before the area where there is no horse access to the top of the trail.

Public comment closed at 2:29 p.m.

Mr. Malone stated that staff could investigate adding a tie rack and make sure tied horses would not block access to hikers.

Chair Riffle suggested not putting the tie rack on the downhill side for the safety of the horses.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired whether the motion should be amended to incorporate the tie rack.

Mr. Malone responded that he would prefer to first confirm its feasibility.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Riffle seconded the motion to forward the following recommendations to the full Board of Directors for their review and consideration:

**Planning and Natural Resources Committee
April 15, 2025**

Page 5

1. Add a 0.3-mile legacy road as part of the trail network at Thornewood Open Space Preserve, with access via a side use trail to a rock placed at the time of August Schilling's ownership inscribed with the phrase "memento mori", the former site of a "Redwood Temple" and former site of a "Redwood Pergola" and designate the trail for hiking and dog on leash use and a portion of the trail for equestrian use, with the proposed trail name of the Rock of Ages Trail.
2. Approve a conceptual alignment of a new trail extension to connect the vista point to the "rock of ages" via a trail extension designed to meet trail standards.
3. Rename the Schilling Lake Trail to the Schilling Trail.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-0-0 (Absent Director Kishimoto)

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 2:35 p.m.

Stephanie Gross
Deputy District Clerk