



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-156
Meeting 25-31
December 3, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Fiscal Year 2026 Big Rock Projects -- Progress Update

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Receive a progress update on the Fiscal Year 2026 (highest priority) Big Rock Projects.
No Board action required.

SUMMARY

The Big Rocks are projects that have the highest priorities from all the projects and programs that make up the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District)'s ambitious and extensive annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP). The District identifies these Big Rock projects to ensure the resources and capacity needed to complete their scope of work (absent outside factors out of District control) are appropriately and continuously allocated throughout the life of these projects and remove/avoid any factors within District control that may otherwise delay completion. This report provides a progress update on the Fiscal Year 2025-26 (FY26) Big Rock Projects.

DISCUSSION

On March 5, 2025, as part of the Board of Directors (Board) retreat to review the proposed FY26 through FY28 CIAP projects, the Board provided feedback to inform the FY26 Big Rocks list. The Big Rocks list was subsequently updated and affirmed by the Action Plan and Budget Committee (ABC) at its May 6, 2025 meeting as follows:

Climate Resiliency & Biodiversity Projects

- Alma Bridge Road Wildlife Passage
- Los Gatos Creek Watershed Phase 2
- Wildlife Corridor: Highway 17 Crossing

Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve Projects

- Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan
- Hwy 35 Multi-Use Trail Crossing and Parking Implementation
- Purisima-to-the-Sea Parking
- Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail
- Purisima Creek Road Vehicle Access

Public Access and Trails

- Bay Area Ridge Trail: Highway 17 Crossing
- La Honda Creek Parking and Trailhead Access - Phase 1 Feasibility Study and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review

Financial and Operational Sustainability Model (FOSM) Refresh Implementation

- FOSM Implementation
- Recruitments

Infrastructure Improvements

- Coastal Field Office Build Out
- Skyline Field Office Rebuild

The status of each Big Rock project is summarized in Attachment 1. All of the Big Rock projects are progressing on or ahead of schedule except for the following three projects:

- *Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP)* – Delays are due to the discovery of wetlands along proposed trail alignments, which required additional evaluation and coordination. CEQA review is now anticipated to be completed by summer 2026.
- *Hwy 35 Multiuse Trail Crossing and Parking Implementation* – Project design is proceeding as planned; however, construction is now anticipated to be shifted from FY27 to FY28 due to the CEQA delay noted above (CEQA compliance is being provided under the Purisima CUMP). Note: permit approval is dependent on CEQA completion and permitting *normally* requires one year to receive all permit approvals. Staff are evaluating strategies to minimize impacts to the overall project schedule.
- *La Honda Creek Parking and Trailhead Access Feasibility Study and CEQA Review* – Project is currently in the CEQA review phase and experiencing delays due to the need for additional traffic studies. CEQA review for the portion of the project not affected by the additional traffic analysis is continuing.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **March 6, 2024 (Board Meeting):** FY25 - FY27 CIAP Review ([R-24-27](#), [Minutes](#))
- **December 3, 2024 (Board Meeting):** Progress on Big Rock Projects ([Board FYI Memo](#))
- **March 5, 2025 (Board Meeting):** FY26 - FY28 CIAP Review ([R-25-25](#), [Minutes](#))
- **May 6, 2025 (Action Plan and Budget Committee Meeting):** FY26 Budget and Three-Year CIAP Review ([R-25-57](#), [Minutes](#))

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

Staff will continue implementing Big Rock projects as planned.

Attachment:

1. FY26 Big Rock Projects Status Table

Responsible Department Head:

Ana Ruiz, General Manager

Prepared by / Contact person:

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Table 1 - FY26 Big Rock Projects Progress Update

Project Group	Project Name	Purpose	FY26 Scope	FY27 Scope	FY28 Scope	Current Status	Comment
Climate Resilience & Biodiversity	Alma Bridge Road Newt Crossing	Partner with Santa Clara County to complete CEQA, design, permitting and implementation to provide safe passage for wildlife (newts). Midpen will retain a consultant to provide CEQA and design services to provide safe passage for newts across Alma Bridge Road. Implementation to be led by Midpen or county. Long term operation and maintenance to shift to county.	Complete CEQA and initiate permitting. County to lead final design and bidding.	County to implement, potentially in phases. Midpen to complete effectiveness monitoring in future years.	County to implement. Midpen to complete effectiveness monitoring in future years.	Open – on schedule	Staff continue to work with project partners and consultants to complete Phase II of the project, including 65% Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E), environmental clearance, and permit application submittal. In addition, staff continue to integrate the project with the adjacent Beatty Parking Area project and are exploring the potential to help fund a small-scale first phase of the roadway newt crossing improvements. Midpen's grants team is also continuing to seek grant funding for future phases of the project, including final design and construction of the overall project.
	Los Gatos Creek Watershed Phase 2	Implement the Phase 2 CalFire grant at multiple preserves to improve wildland fire resiliency to protect ecosystem function.	Begin year 2 of treatment, including the removal of high priority invasive species from projects sites. Continue seed procurement for post-treatment.	Begin year 3 of treatment, including the removal of high-priority invasive species from project sites. Continue seed procurement for post-treatment.	Project completed in prior year.	Open –on schedule	Staff are attending weekly project meetings with collaborators, coordinating pre-treatment surveys, and working with San Jose Conservation Corps to complete pre-project IPM work. 80 acres of forest health work have been completed in El Sereno to date. The completed acres of Midpen property treated by 2027 will be 494, with most work happening in Sierra Azul and St. Joseph's Hill preserves.
	Wildlife Corridor: Highway 17 Crossing	Work with partners to develop, engineer, and implement wildlife crossing improvements at Highway 17 to provide safe movement for wildlife connecting over 30,000 acres of protected public lands.	Continue to work with Valley Transportation Agency (VTA). If project has Caltrans approval, continue collaboration with VTA to complete PS&E for construction of undercrossing structure and improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way. Finalize property access requirements and mitigation credit agreements as needed. Finalize partnership	Continue to work with VTA, If project has Caltrans approval, has received permits and funding, solicit bids, award contract and begin construction.	Continue collaboration with VTA to administer ongoing construction of undercrossing structure and improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way, if there is sufficient funding for construction.	Open – on schedule	VTA delivered the 35% Construction Document package for District and Caltrans Review. Staff reviewed and provided comments on the package and returned to VTA for incorporation into 65% design. Coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife on Mitigation Credit Agreement is on-going. Staff has compiled and submitted several grant proposals in pursuit of project funding, including to the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and State Coastal Conservancy (SCC).

Project Group	Project Name	Purpose	FY26 Scope	FY27 Scope	FY28 Scope	Current Status	Comment
			agreements with partner agencies and organizations as needed.				Offer submitted to SJWC in October for property rights needed (plus a few extra acres for the mitigation credit agreement).
Purisima Creek Redwoods	Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP)	Develop comprehensive plan for new public access improvements and resource and land management activities. Includes the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area, Highway 35 Trail Crossing and Parking Expansion, Purisima Multimodal Access, and Irish Ridge Restoration Plan. This plan would serve as the basis to conduct environmental (CEQA) review and initiate the permitting process.	Complete comprehensive use and management plan and CEQA review. Seek Board approval and CEQA certification. Note: implementation of individual projects identified in the plan are listed separately as discrete projects in this and subsequent fiscal years.	Project completed in prior fiscal year(s).	Project completed in prior fiscal year(s).	Open – Experiencing delays due to discovery of wetlands along proposed trail alignments which required additional evaluation and coordination. CEQA review is anticipated to be completed by summer of 2026.	At the October 22, 2025 Board meeting, the Board accepted the updated CUMP implementation action table as the project description to initiate CEQA environmental review. Staff are coordinating with the CEQA consultant to finalize the project description and confirm if any additional technical studies are needed for CEQA analysis. Next steps include staff preparation of the full CUMP draft and conducting AB52 tribal consultation, as required for CEQA.
	Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking	Construct a new parking area to expand capacity at the existing North Ridge lot and a crossing to connect to a new Bay Area Ridge Trail extension.	Move conceptual designs to 65-95% construction plans and prepare/submit for permits, contingent on CEQA certification. Seek grant funding or other means of financing the project.	Obtain local permitting, complete bid process and initiate construction	Complete construction.	Open – on schedule currently, but construction schedule is anticipated to be shifted from FY27 to FY28	Design is 65% complete. Staff provided a FYI memo to the Board at its August 27, 2025 meeting outlining design updates. Design information is currently being used for the CEQA project description as part of the Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan. The first draft of the CEQA description has been reviewed and comments have been provided. Staff are also engaging in ongoing meetings with the San Francisco Public Utility Commission (SFPUC) regarding the spur trail that connects the Hwy 35 crossing to the Bay Area Ridge Trail on the SFPUC property. A conceptual alignment has been established and a cost-sharing agreement with SFPUC is under development.

Project Group	Project Name	Purpose	FY26 Scope	FY27 Scope	FY28 Scope	Current Status	Comment
							While design is progressing as planned, construction is anticipated to be shifted from FY27 to FY28 due to a slight delay in CEQA review and extensive permitting processes. Staff are evaluating strategies to reduce impacts to the overall project schedule.
	Purisima-to-the-sea Parking	Provide a public access staging area and connections to the redwoods trail system and the Coastal Trail. Plan, design, permit and construct new parking area and trailhead amenities.	Complete design development and prepare construction documents. Prepare and submit local permits, contingent on certification of CEQA.	Obtain local permits, complete bid process, award of contract to contractor.	Complete pre-construction surveys and initiate construction.	Open – on schedule	Design is 65% complete. Design information informs the CEQA project description as part of the Purisima CUMP. Coordination with POST regarding their connecting North Trail Easement Project to the Coastal Trail is ongoing. Grant funding opportunities are being pursued, with upcoming tours with potential funding agencies and elected officials.
	Purisima-to-the-sea Trails	Connect the existing Purisima Creek Redwoods trail system to the Pacific Ocean by completing the multi-use Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail.	Secure permits.	Initiate construction.	Continue trail construction.	Open – on schedule	Design is 35% complete. Design information informs the CEQA project description as part of the Purisima CUMP. Met with CDFW, USACE and received guidance from RWQCB on the wetlands identified in the roadbed to determine a permitting strategy.
	Purisima Creek Road Vehicle Access	Purisima Creek Road is not passable due to a washout from the 2022-23 storms. Assess road for long-term viability as a road, including potential replacement of three bridges. Rebuild washouts and replace bridges for patrol and emergency vehicle access.	Certify CEQA document for repair work. Finalize bridge scope and construction documents. Secure permits for the bridge repair. Solicit bids, award contract, and begin bridge repair work.	Complete bridge repair. Secure permits for slide repairs.	Solicit bids, award contract and complete the slide repairs.	Open – on schedule	Design is 65% complete. CEQA consultant determined that the District's Open Space Restoration and Maintenance Plan (OSRMP) provides adequate CEQA coverage for this project and no additional project-level CEQA certification is necessary. Consultant is focusing on completing OSMRP-required pre-construction biological and botanical surveys of the project sites. The consultant also determined that the OSMRP provides regulatory permit coverage for the project's scope of work and quantities. Staff are continuing to pursue FEMA funding for this project. CalOES and FEMA have notified the District that the bridge sites are nearing full approval.

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Public Access & Trails	Bay Area Ridge Trail: Highway 17 Crossing	Provide a regional recreational trail crossing across Highway 17 in Santa Clara County by constructing a new overcrossing near Los Gatos and Lexington Reservoir in close alignment with the Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing project MAA20-001. See project MAA20-004 for description of relevant new trails and connections associated with the overcrossing.	Continue collaboration with VTA to complete PS&E for construction of crossing structure and improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way. Finalize property access requirements and secure permits for construction of connecting trails. Finalize partnership agreements with partner agencies and organizations as needed.	Continue collaboration with VTA to begin construction on crossing structure and improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way, if there is sufficient funding for construction.	Continue collaboration with VTA to administer ongoing construction of crossing structure and improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way, if there is sufficient funding for construction. Note: budget for this year is allocated in General Fund 40 due to insufficient MAA funds.	Open – on schedule	VTA delivered the 35% Construction Document package for District and Caltrans Review. Staff reviewed and provided comments on the package and returned to VTA for incorporation into 65% design. Coordination with CDFW on Mitigation Credit Agreement is on-going. Staff has compiled and submitted several grant proposals in pursuit of project funding, including to the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and State Coastal Conservancy (SCC). Offer submitted to SJWC in October for property rights needed (plus a few extra acres for the mitigation credit agreement).
	La Honda Creek Parking and Trailhead Access Feasibility Study and CEQA Review	Provide parking, trailhead access and amenities to support opening the currently closed central portion of La Honda Creek to the public. Conduct technical studies, an analysis of existing conditions, opportunities and challenges to assess the feasibility and conduct environmental review of six sites recommended by the 2019-20 La Honda Public Access Working Group.	Complete environmental review analysis, seek board certification of CEQA and obtain approval of project to proceed with design and implementation.	Issue the notice of determination for CEQA. Pending completion of Phase 1 and board approval of project, Engineering and Construction Department initiates Phase 2 design and implementation under MAA05-013.	Project completed in prior fiscal year(s).	Open – Currently experiencing schedule delays due to additional traffic studies	Technical studies to support CEQA evaluation are on-going. As part of the CEQA analysis, the traffic consultant identified traffic concerns that warrant additional traffic studies. The additional traffic studies are expected to be completed by mid-December. CEQA review for the portion of the project not affected by the additional traffic analysis is continuing. Midpen staff are initiating tribal consultation.
Implement FOSM Refresh	FOSM Update	Provide a comprehensive update and implementation of the Financial Organization Sustainability Model (FOSM) with a focus on program delivery, organization, reporting structure, staffing and financial sustainability and a broader 10-year outlook.	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY25.	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY26.	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY27.	Open – on schedule	The implementation of the FOSM Refresh as parsed out over FY24-27 is on schedule. To date, all projects have started on schedule.
	Recruitments	Support FOSM refresh implementation	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY25.	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY26.	Implement FOSM Refresh recommendations scheduled for FY27.	Open – on schedule	The recruitments as outlined in the FOSM Refresh as parsed out over FY24-27 is ahead of schedule. To date, all recruitments have started on schedule and have been completed within the timeframe or ahead of schedule.

Project Group	Project Name	Purpose	FY26 Scope	FY27 Scope	FY28 Scope	Current Status	Comment
Infrastructure Improvements	Coastal Field Office (CAO) Build Out	Build out a coastal area office to support management and maintenance of coastal land holdings.	Conduct programming, design development, and environmental review.	Finalize design development, permitting, and environmental review.	Solicit bids and award a contract for construction. Begin construction.	Open – on schedule	The coastal field office property was secured on October 10, 2025. District staff completed site programming and retained an architect firm for site assessment and preliminary design services. While waiting for close of escrow, staff compiled a preliminary application for the proposed CAO for submittal to the City of Half Moon Bay and submitted it as soon as the property was under District ownership. City staff review of the preliminary application will provide direction for the design consultant to finalize their assessment scope.
	Skyline Field Office Rebuild	Build facility at new site to continue supporting field staff operational needs in the Skyline Field Office (SFO) region.	Continue feasibility studies and initiate conceptual design development. Drill well if deemed feasible.	Pending board selection of a conceptual design, initiate schematic design phase. Continue well drilling work if deemed feasible.	Pending board selection of a project design alternative, initiate CEQA. Pending CEQA certification, initiate land use permits.	Open – ahead of schedule	Presented the schematic design to the Board on October 22, 2025. Obtained Board approval of the schematic design as the project description and scope to initiate environmental review. Technical studies continue and District staff have initiated the land use permit process.