



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-23-67  
Meeting 23-19  
July 26, 2023

## AGENDA ITEM 7

### AGENDA ITEM

Disposition of Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Approve the removal of the Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn, two structures that have fallen in disrepair, have no planned future reuse potential, and are not eligible for historic listing; approve the associated Comprehensive Use and Management Plan Amendments to authorize the removal of both structures.

### SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) purchased the Paul Property as an addition to Long Ridge Open Space Preserve in 1997, which included the Paul Cabin. The District purchased the Rapley Property in 2005 as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, which included the Rapley Barn and outbuildings. As part of the District's on-going effort to effectively manage site improvements that are inherited as part of open space land purchases, the District has evaluated the disposition options for the Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn consistent with Board Policy 4.09, *Factors to Consider for Structures Disposition*. Based on staff's evaluation, these structures in the Skyline area are in distinctly remote closed areas of the preserves that are challenging to patrol, not suitable for reuse, in various stages of disrepair and are not eligible for historic listing. For these reasons and to ensure limited staffing resources are deployed to manage dozens of other priority structures, the General Manager recommends the removal of the Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn. If approved, removal work would begin in Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25) with funds requested during the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

### BACKGROUND

#### Paul Cabin

On April 9, 1997 (R-97-59), the Board of Directors (Board) approved the purchase of the 157-acre Paul property within unincorporated Santa Cruz County as an addition to Long Ridge Open Space Preserve. The terrain of the property ranges from moderately to steeply sloping hillsides. See Attachment 1 for site map.

As part of the purchase, the District acquired the Paul Cabin and entered into a five-year Caretaker Rental Agreement with the incumbent tenant. The Paul Cabin is located at the end of a 1,747 foot (0.33 mile) driveway in a clearing. Public trail access via the Achistaca Trail runs perpendicular to the cabin driveway near Skyline Boulevard (State Highway 35) before joining up to the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail to the south. There is no public parking or public access to the house site.

The cabin is 800 square feet and comprised of a combined living room and kitchen area, two small bedrooms, and a small bathroom. A spring-fed gravity system brought non-potable water into a holding tank before pumping water into the cabin; the water is untreated and was therefore solely used for certain cleaning purposes only (not consumable). Further, the spring is not a reliable source of water; water was delivered on occasion to the caretaker-tenant by the nearby CalFire station. The cabin has remained unoccupied since 2017 upon the passing of the caretaker-tenant.

The cabin was estimated to be constructed in the late 1970s. Garavaglia Associates, Inc., conducted a historic resource evaluation of the cabin and concluded that “the building does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or historic method of construction, nor does it represent the works of a master, nor possess high artistic values, nor represent a significant and distinguishable entity”. The main structure is identifiable, but not distinguishable from other cabins of a similar type. It does not exemplify a type, period, or method of construction, instead showcasing a few methods of construction and a variety of periods (mid 1970’s to early 1980’s”).

### Rapley Barn

On December 20, 2005 (R-05-130), the Board approved the purchase of the 151.15-acre Rapley Ranch property as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. The Rapley Ranch property is located one mile south of Skyline Boulevard (State Highway 35) on Rapley Ranch Road on the west-facing slopes of Russian Ridge. The property overlooks scenic coastal hills and valleys, including Mindego Hill and Langley Hill. See Attachment 2 for site map.

As part of the purchase, the District acquired the Rapley Barn and several outbuildings. The Rapley Barn is a 2,000 square foot, one-story broken gable barn comprised of three bays. The barn is in a dilapidated and unsafe condition and would require significant improvements to meet current codes. Other outbuildings in the vicinity of the site, including a 400-square foot tool shed west of the barn, are also in poor condition.

The Rapley homestead was constructed in piecemeal fashion beginning in the late 1870s through the early 1970s. The residence was burned down in 2000 prior to District purchase. Garavaglia Associates, Inc., conducted a historic resource evaluation of the structures and concluded that the Rapley Barn does not display a level of historical significance or integrity that would qualify it for listing as a historic resource on the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historic Places, or on the San Mateo County list of historic landmarks as it is not associated with any important events or patterns of history that place it as unique or historic at the local, state, or national levels of significance.

## **DISCUSSION**

As part of the District’s ongoing effort to effectively manage site improvements that are inherited as part of open space land purchases, such as buildings, barns, and utility structures, staff have evaluated disposition options and costs for structures based on their current condition. Board Policy 4.09, *Factors to Consider for Structures Disposition*, provides a series of decision-making factors to consider for the disposition of structures. An evaluation of the factors relative to each structure is included below followed by a description of the disposition options.

**Table 1. Factors to Consider for Paul Cabin**

<b>Factors to Consider for Structures:</b>	<b>Paul Cabin</b>
<b>A. Board-Adopted Policies</b>	Per <i>4.02 Improvements on District Lands</i> , a structure is retained or renovated if it is complementary to the objectives of the District. The factors to consider are further explored below.
<b>B. Compatibility with Open Space Character of the Site</b>	Poor. Although the cabin remains out of view from the public access trail, the structure does not add to the character of the site.
<b>C. Historic and Educational Value</b>	None - a Historic Resource Evaluation was conducted, determining that the structure is not be eligible for federal, state, or local listing as a historic resource.
<b>D. Partnership Opportunities / Cooperation</b>	None
<b>E. Potential Financial Cost, Including Liability and Management</b>	See details below
<b>F. Proposed and Potential Uses</b>	The cabin and driveway would require significant upgrades and ongoing maintenance obligations if reconsidered for rental reuse. Moreover, there is no existing potable water source for the residence, affecting the habitability of the structure.
<b>G. Public Sentiment and Input</b>	None - no public input has been received and staff is not aware of any strong public attachment.
<b>H. Regional Important or Value</b>	None
<b>I. Strategic Fit</b>	Minimal - provides poor opportunity for employee housing due to lack of potable water source. Moreover, nine (9) District-owned residences that are in good condition with standard utilities available already exist within three miles of the site.
<b>J. Tradeoffs and Impacts on District Resources</b>	Cost benefit analysis and tradeoffs are discussed further below.
<b>K. Visitor Experience</b>	Structure may impede a future opportunity to consider opening the area to public access, such as extending the driveway to expand the trail network.
<b>L. Condition of the Structure</b>	Fair condition for the roof and siding; pier foundation may need stabilization; poor water service due to lack of potable water source

*Disposition Options for Paul the Cabin:*

*Option 1) Retain in Current State*

This option aims to preserve the cabin as-is whilst addressing immediate perimeter safety. A sink hole was discovered by patrol in March 2023 at the leach field site behind the cabin. Staff estimates \$20,000 to address and repair the leach field, with a 20-year maintenance cost of \$205,000 to account for staff time to check exterior and interior conditions for visual hazards and maintain defensible space. Note that retaining structures with no reuse will

result in ongoing management, tracking, and enforcement needs for a structure that is obsolete, with no historic/cultural significance, effectively pulling limited staff resources from other higher priorities activities.

*Option 2) Stabilize Paul Cabin*

In addition to addressing perimeter safety as described in Option 1 above, stabilization measures for the Paul Cabin would include roof repair, securing openings such as doors and windows, and repainting the exterior for water proofing. Staff estimates between \$50,000 to \$60,000 for stabilization measures, with a 20-year maintenance cost estimate of \$255,000 to account for repairs, vegetative fuel management/maintaining defensible space and staff time. Similar to Option 1 - retaining structures with no reuse will result in ongoing management, tracking, and enforcement needs for a structure that is obsolete, with no historic/cultural significance, effectively pulling limited staff resources from other higher priorities activities.

*Option 3) Rehabilitate and Repair Paul Cabin*

To make the cabin habitable for rental reuse, staff estimates the construction cost at approximately \$150,000 to repair the roof and siding, replace windows, remodel the interior with new appliances, upgrade the septic system, repair the leach field, restore power, and bring the cabin up to code. These costs, however, **do not include** providing a viable potable water system. The driveway (0.33 mile) from Skyline Boulevard is estimated at an additional \$100,000 for repairs to provide year-round residential access.

Moreover, the anticipated ongoing material maintenance costs for the Paul Cabin would be \$5,000 per year, as is typical for District residences, or \$125,000 over 25 years. Structure maintenance includes plumbing repairs, septic maintenance, and water system testing. The assumed cost of staff time to manage the property and oversee repairs, as well as conduct fuel reduction and pest management treatments, is \$300,000. Although this option provides reuse for onsite/caretaker vigilance and to maintain structure integrity by a responsible tenant, the lack of potable water is a major concern that limits the habitability of the site.

*Option 4) Remove Paul Cabin*

Removing the Paul Cabin includes removal of the main cabin and associated accessory structures, such as garden beds, chicken coop, tool sheds, and outdoor staircase; removal or abandonment of the septic system, and minor grading work and use of native seed to stabilize the area. Staff estimates the cost of removing the Paul Cabin and accessory structures to be \$125,000 based on recently completed similar projects.

Removal of the Paul Cabin would not impact District housing/operational needs along Skyline Boulevard. Currently, 50% of all District housing are located on Skyline Boulevard between Highway 9 and Highway 92 – a total of 17 units. Of these units, eight house District staff who provide field services in the area, and two house staff who do not provide field services. Moreover, nine housing units are located within three miles of the Paul Cabin.

**Table 2. Cost Analysis of Disposition Options for the Paul Cabin**

Location	Costs	Option #1	Option #2	Option #3	Option #4
		Retain in Current State	Stabilize	Rehabilitation and Reuse	Removal <i>GM Recommendation</i>
Paul Cabin <i>Long Ridge Open Space Preserve</i>	Design	-	\$6,500	\$20,000	-
	Construction	\$20,000	\$60,000	\$150,000	\$125,000
	20-year Maintenance	\$205,000	\$255,000	\$425,000	-
	Viable potable water	-	-	Unknown cost	-
	Vehicular Access	-	-	\$100,000	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$225,000</b>	<b>\$321,500</b>	<b>\$695,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>

**Table 3. Factors to Consider for Rapley Barn**

Factors to Consider for Structures:	Rapley Barn
A. Board-Adopted Policies	Per <i>4.02 Improvements on District Lands</i> , a structure is retained or renovated if it is complementary to the objectives of the District. The factors to consider are further explored below.
B. Compatibility with Open Space Character of the Site	Neutral - The barn may be considered a feature characteristic of former ranching uses that provides a sense of place. However, in its current state, the structure is detracting from its natural surroundings.
C. Historic and Educational Value	None - A Historic Resource Evaluation was conducted determining that the structure is not be eligible for federal, state, or local listing as a historic resource.
D. Partnership Opportunities / Cooperation	None
E. Potential Financial Cost, Including Liability and Management	See details below
F. Proposed and Potential Uses	Minimal. Benefit – Can be stabilized for storage purposes, however, use is expected to be minimal given its location; not viable as a functioning barn nor recommended for public use or interpretation.
G. Public Sentiment and Input	No public input has been received and staff is not aware of any strong public attachment to the structures. Jimmy Rapley was an early rancher and local institution on Skyline. There will likely be interest in keeping his name attached to the site and preserving a 1931 concrete marker stating “was planted by Jim Rapley” that is located next to a redwood.
H. Regional Importance or Value	None

Factors to Consider for Structures:	Rapley Barn
I. Strategic Fit	Minimal - other priority barns with similar architectural features and with historic value have been stabilized at District preserves for reuse and/or ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.
J. Tradeoffs and Impacts on District Resources	Cost benefit analysis is discussed below.
K. Visitor Experience	In its current state, the area is unsafe to enter. There is no plan to make the structure available for public use and the value for interpretation is considered low.
L. Condition of the Structure	Extremely poor; main barn deteriorated due to fallen roof and siding. Accessory structures are either partially or completely collapsed.

*Disposition Options for Rapley Barn:*

*Option 1) Retain Rapley Barn*

Although the structure is not visible from Rapley Ranch Road, the deteriorated structures and scattered debris may pose as a safety hazard if inadvertently accessed by the public. Retaining the Rapley Barn in its current state would necessitate selective demolition to remove collapsed accessory structures and debris, and vegetation management. Staff estimates a clean-up cost of \$20,000, and a 20-year maintenance cost of \$205,000 to manage vegetation and maintain defensible space around the barn and for periodic staff visits to check for visual hazards. Retaining obsolete structures that have no reuse potential will result in ongoing management, tracking, and enforcement needs, effectively pulling limited staff resources from other higher priorities activities.

*Option 2) Stabilize Rapley Barn*

A structural stabilization project could be comprised of stabilizing and repairing damaged framing, replacing the siding and roofing, and removing accessory structures on the homesite. Staff estimates design and permitting costs to be \$100,000, and the construction costs to be \$400,000 based on similarly bid projects. The construction estimate does not include staff time to manage the contract or pursue permits. Although the Rapley Barn may have some visual interest as a remnant barn on the landscape, there are other barns located on District lands that provide a similar experience and, unlike the Rapley Barn, hold historic significance and/or reuse value. Considering the many similar structures managed by the District, this structure may be considered of too low a value in comparison to retain and manage over the long-term.

*Option 3) Rehabilitation and Reuse*

Rehabilitation and reuse of the Rapley Barn and its outbuildings is not recommended. There are no District activities at present or planned that necessitate the reuse of such a barn; further, the cost for rehabilitation is assumed to be far greater than the other options and be in excess of \$1,000,000. Costs include extensive staff time to oversee programming, managing contracts, and permitting. Given the lack of reuse potential, as stated above, there is a low rationale to retain and manage the structure over the long-term, especially considering the limited staffing resources available to manage other priority structures that are located elsewhere on District lands.

*Option 4) Remove the Rapley Barn*

Removing the Rapley Barn includes removal of the main barn and all accessory structures, such as the tool shed and collapsed cottage; minor grading work; and use of native seed to stabilize the area. Staff estimates the cost to be \$200,000 based on recently completed similar projects. The estimate does not include staff time to manage the contract and secure permits.

**Table 4. Cost Analysis of Disposition Options for the Rapley Barn**

Location	Costs	Option #1	Option #2	Option #3	Option #4
		Retain in Current State	Stabilize	Rehabilitation and Reuse *	Remove <i>GM Recommendation</i>
Rapley Barn <i>Russian Ridge</i> <i>Open Space</i> <i>Preserve</i>	Design	-	\$100,000	n/a	-
	Construction	\$20,000	\$400,000	n/a	\$200,000
	20-year Maintenance	\$205,000	\$255,000	n/a	-
<b>Total</b>		\$225,000	\$755,000	n/a	\$200,000

\*Cost will be significantly higher than other options, in excess of \$1,000,000.

Natural Resources

Removing each non-historic, deteriorated structure and returning both sites to a more natural state would enhance habitat by eliminating potential wildlife entrapment hazards and restoring a developed area to a semi-natural habitat – thus supporting one of the legs of the District’s mission “to protect and restore the natural environment”. Other project activities, including seeding the building footprint with native plants and conducting invasive pest management activities (e.g., invasive weed removal), would also contribute to habitat restoration and enhancement.

The project sites are located within habitat for the following special status species. Removal of the structures would assist in returning the building footprint to become available habitat and/or facilitate wildlife movement and remove potential wildlife entrapment hazards for all of the species listed below with the exception of bats that may potentially utilize the Paul Cabin for roosting (not breeding).

**Table 5. Special Status Species**

Paul Cabin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (<i>Neotoma fuscipes annectens</i>), State Species of Special Concern (SSC)</li> <li>Mountain lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>) Candidate State Threatened Species</li> <li>California giant salamander (<i>Dicamptodon ensatus</i>), SSC</li> <li>Santa Cruz black salamander (<i>Aneides flavipunctatus niger</i>), SSC</li> <li>Roosting bat species – structure may provide habitat</li> </ul>
Rapley Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (<i>Neotoma fuscipes annectens</i>)</li> <li>San Francisco garter snake (<i>Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia</i>) Federally Endangered</li> <li>American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>), SSC</li> <li>Mountain lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>) Candidate State Threatened Species</li> <li>Burrowing owl (<i>Athene cunicularia</i>), SSC</li> <li>Grasshopper sparrow (<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>), SSC</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White-tailed kite (<i>Elanus leucurus</i>), SSC</li> <li>• Northern harrier (<i>Circus hudsonius</i>), SSC</li> </ul>
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### Public Access Considerations

There are no existing or future plans for public access at either location.

### ***Recommendation: Removal of the Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn***

The General Manager recommends removal of the Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn as they are not historically significant, pose opportunities for vandalism, detract from the surrounding open space and natural environment, are in poor condition, and require significant investments to repair and maintain. Also, given the nine other District housing structures in the area, sufficient onsite District presence already exists (eyes and ears to monitor lands during off hours/presence to service on-call needs) within the Skyline area. Moreover, removing these obsolete structures from the landscape will avoid detracting limited staffing resources to managing, maintaining, and patrolling structures of low value or need for the District. If approved, the footprints of the removed structures would be returned to a more natural state using native seed.

## **USE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### Paul Cabin

A Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) was approved by the Board when the property was first purchased (R-97-10). The PUMP established an action to secure the water system and general clean-up of debris on the site. The PUMP took effect at the close of escrow and remains in effect. The caretaker who occupied the house maintained the water system and felt it met his needs, so further improvements to the water system were not made during his occupancy. After he passed away, the water system and driveway became impediments to making the structure a standard rental. Major repairs were deferred until a Board decision on the deposition of the structure. If the Board approves the removal of the Paul Cabin, there would no longer be a need to secure the water system. Therefore, the following amendment to the Preliminary U&M Plan is proposed (deletions are shown in strikeout, additions are shown in underline).

House:                   ~~Secure water system, general clean-up of debris.~~  
Remove Paul Cabin and outbuildings; conduct general clean-up of debris; revegetate site using native seed.

### Rapley Barn

A Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) was approved by the Board when the property was purchased on December 20, 2005 (R-05-130). The PUMP took effect at the close of escrow and remains in effect and called for securing and maintaining the structure until a final disposition decision for the barn was made. If the Board approves the removal of the Rapley Barn, the following amendment to the PUMP is proposed (deletions are shown in strikeout, additions are shown in underline).

Structures:           ~~Structures: Secure and maintain the barn; as part of developing a Final Use and Management Plan, determine the final disposition of the barn.~~  
Remove Rapley Barn and outbuildings; revegetate site using native seed.



**FISCAL IMPACT**

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact in FY24. If approved, the proposed demolition work would take place in FY25 with funding requested during the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

The recommended action will not be funded by Measure AA.

**PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

None

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The proposed structures removal project is consistent with the Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) prepared for the Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program (Program) (SCH #2021080129) and in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Garavaglia Associates, Inc., conducted historic resource evaluations of the Paul Cabin and the Rapley Barn. The evaluations concluded that neither of the structures qualify as a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.

The District developed the *Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program* to provide an integrated approach for maintenance and low-impact facility improvements that applies a consistent set of impact avoidance methods and best management practices (BMPs). The Program includes a category of *Restoration and Enhancement* projects to improve or create habitat for plant and animal species and to restore ecosystem function within District Preserves. The Program identifies structural demolitions in sensitive areas as a form of habitat enhancement under the *Restoration and Enhancement* Program category.

The Project site is located within habitat for the federally endangered San Francisco garter snake, candidate state threatened Mountain Lion and several species of special concerns. Removal of the structures would enhance habitat by eliminating potential wildlife entrapment hazards and restoring a developed area to natural habitat. Other project activities, including seeding the building site with native plants and conducting invasive pest management activities, would also contribute to habitat restoration and enhancement.

The District determines that the demolition of the structures is consistent with the activities and determinations established in the Program IS/MND for the *Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program* and would not result in new or more severe significant environmental impacts, nor would the Project require additional mitigation measures.

**NEXT STEPS**

If the Board approves the demolition of Paul Cabin and Rapley Barn, staff will complete permitting through the County of San Mateo and prepare to solicit bids to complete the demolition and removal work in FY25.

Attachments:

1. Paul Cabin Property Site Map and Site Photos
2. Rapley Barn Property Site Map and Site Photos

Responsible Department Head:

Jason Lin, Engineering and Construction Manager

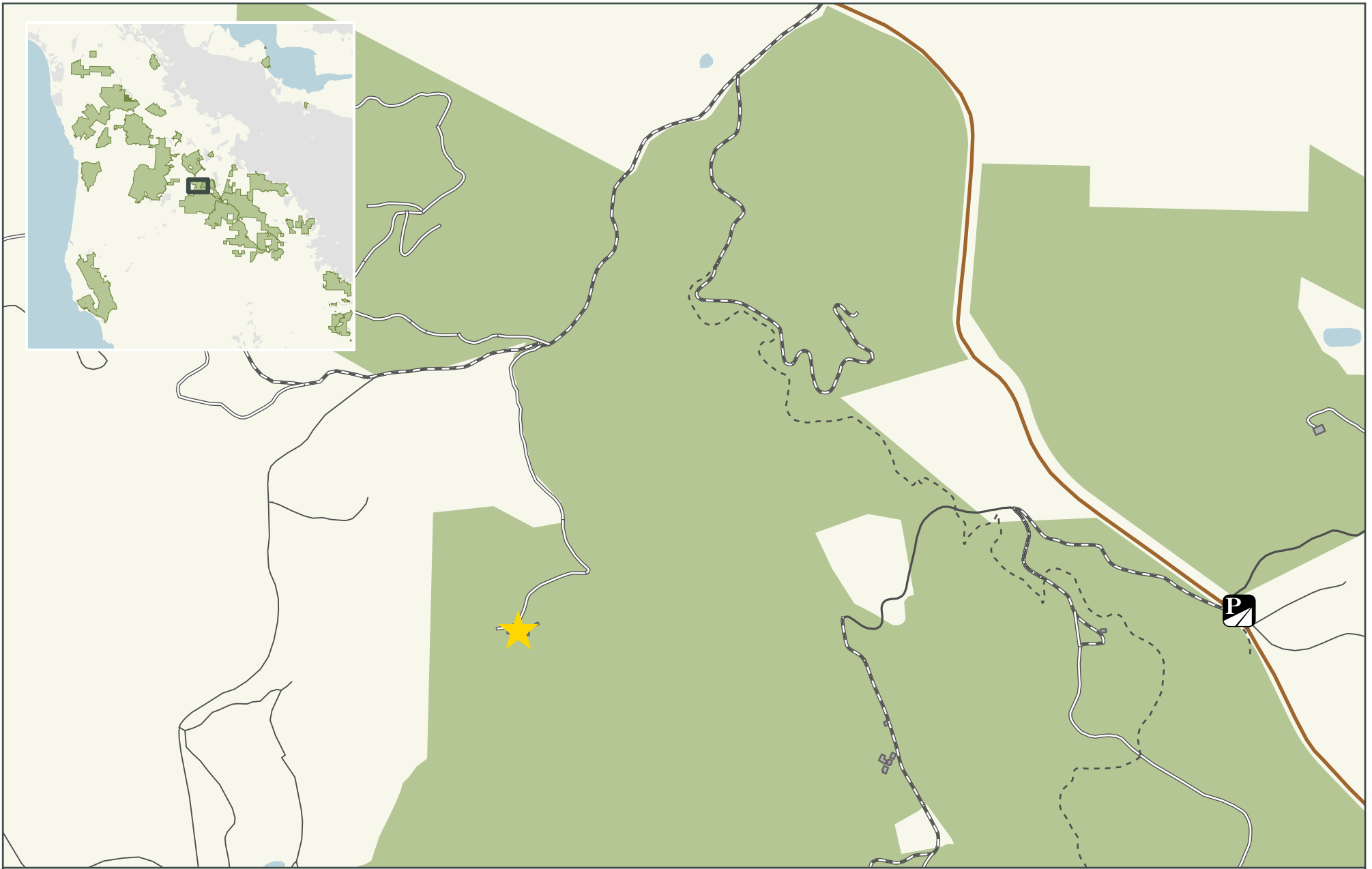
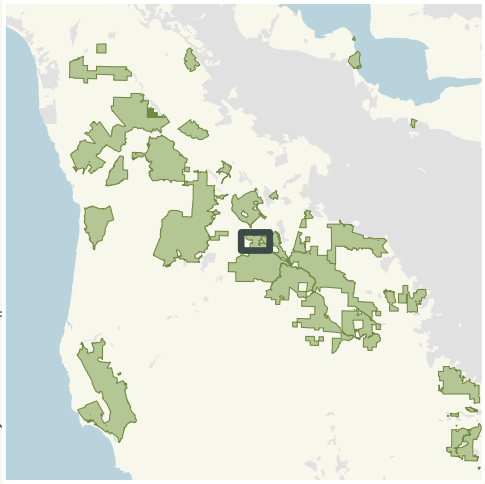
Prepared by / Contact person / Graphics prepared by:

Ivana Yeung, Capital Projects Manager III, Engineering and Construction









# Rapley Barn: Conditions



North Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation



# Rapley Barn: Outbuildings

Tool Shed



Collapsed Outbuildings