



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-86
Meeting 25-18
June 25, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Partnership Agreement with San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School to Complete Resource Management, Vegetation Management, and Maintenance Projects

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the General Manager to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School for a not-to-exceed amount of \$300,000 in Fiscal Year 2025-26.
2. Authorize the General Manager to extend the agreement for three additional consecutive years, if the program achieves specific success criteria, at an annual cost of up to \$300,000 for a total not-to-exceed contract amount of \$1,200,000 over four years.

SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends entering into a new Partnership Agreement with the San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School (SJCC) in Fiscal Year 2025-26 (FY26) that is renewable for up to three additional years. Over the last four years, SJCC has been a collaborative partner in the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) efforts to implement fuel reduction projects, debris removal, and invasive species management. SJCC continues to provide regional leadership in environmental career technical education by in part bringing youth onto District preserves for service projects. The General Manager recommends entering into a Partnership Agreement for an amount not-to-exceed \$300,000 through the end of Fiscal Year 2025-26. If the contracted work achieves specific success criteria, the General Manager recommends authorization to extend the agreement up to three additional years at an annual cost of \$300,000. Over a four-year period, the total cost of the Partnership Agreement would not exceed \$1,200,000. These funds would be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

DISCUSSION

Community Engagement

The SJCC's program model trains young adults in land and water conservation skills. Trainees are professionally supervised and assist public agencies with conservation service projects. The SJCC's mission is strongly aligned with many District goals:

"The San Jose Conservation Corps + Charter School (SJCC+CS) is a non-profit organization that provides opportunity for youth from the ages of 17 ½ - 27 with a quality high school

education and teaches valuable work and life skills that empower them to become responsible, productive, and caring citizens.”

As a non-profit organization that focuses on natural resource management, invasive plant removal, fuel reduction/wildfire prevention, roadside safety clearance, and zero waste recycling, the SJCC is a uniquely structured partner for achieving District strategic goals such as:

- Protect and restore the natural environment to preserve healthy natural systems.
- Implement the Climate Action Plan, expand regional resiliency, and implement climate change adaptation strategies.
- Work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for, and response to wildland fires for enhanced ecosystem resiliency and public safety.
- Reflect the diverse communities we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners.

Over the last four years District staff have collaboratively expanded outreach and partnership with SJCC leadership. District staff have attended the annual SJCC summer BBQ, job fairs, and mentored some SJCC staff as successful Seasonal Open Space Technicians (Seasonal OST). To date we have hired six SJCC staff as Seasonal OST’s and recently promoted a past SJCC partner to a vacant Open Space Technician. The relationship staff has cultivated over the last four years has become a healthy pipeline of diverse, eager, and engaged youth.

Project Delivery

The renewed Partnership Agreement will help the District advance and expand the goals and objectives of the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program (WFRP), which includes vegetation management, invasive species removal, as well as support routine maintenance work in an efficient and timely manner. The District has been utilizing SJCC crew support to improve and streamline various aspects of the project delivery process over the last four years. Some examples of past project support include:

- Hendry’s Creek Restoration Area – invasive weed removal and maintenance of restoration plantings.
- Cherry Springs Prescribed Burn Preparation – tree limbing and vegetation thinning of ladder fuels.
- Big Dipper Conservation Grazing Fence Project – removed brush to clear a path for fence repair to facilitate the return of conservation grazing on the Big Dipper/Mindego Grazing Unit.
- Invasive weed removal on Loma Prieta Ridge following forest health work.
- Creation of an emergency escape route fuel break through Thornewood Open Space Preserve (OSP) from Espinosa Road to Highway 84.
- Teague Hill fuel reduction work along Partition Road in Teague Hill OSP to create a shaded fuel break
- Manual invasive plant management work in Thornewood OSP to remove invasive species in fuel reduction areas.

A renewed Partnership Agreement with the SJCC would continue the current partnership that provides District project managers with an expanded qualified workforce to complete numerous

projects. The SJCC would be immediately available to take on assignments that have already undergone environmental review and permitting, including vegetation management projects. Additionally, over the past four years, SJCC crews have expanded their experience and expertise working with District staff on District lands, which has increased not only their knowledge of our practices and procedures but also has increased their skills and productivity resulting in improved service delivery and reliability.

The District has maintained a well-established, strong working relationship with the SJCC. In the past four years, SJCC has worked on a variety of District projects totaling \$363,373. Entering into a new Partnership Agreement and increasing the total amount of contracted work within a given year will provide maximum flexibility and allow the District to engage the SJCC in expanding the amount of vegetation and fuels management work that is completed each year. The SJCC is well equipped and prepared to provide the additional resources required to successfully implement this partnership and assist the District in meeting its fuel management goals. While there is no guarantee that the full contract amount would be used in a given year, it would allow up to \$300,000 to be expensed in the first year of the Partnership Agreement and up to \$300,000 per year in the following three years of the Partnership Agreement. Projects will include fuel reduction work and invasive plant management work throughout the District. In FY26 and FY27, \$150,000 of work will be specifically allocated to support Phase II of the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative Forest Health Grant-funded work in El Sereno, Felton Station, St. Joseph's Hill, and Sierra Azul Open Space Preserves.

As vegetation management work continues to expand, the District will need additional resources. SJCC is uniquely prepared to help the District implement this program in a cost-effective manner. A typical crew consists of 5-10 members and 1-2 supervisors, depending on the scope of work. The daily crew cost when they report from their San Jose headquarters is \$2,625 - \$5,250, depending on the number of corpsmembers assigned to each project. Based upon the project scope and location, in-preserve spike (temporary) camps can be organized to improve operational efficiency and production. Both the Black Mountain Backpack Camp at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve and the Event Center in the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve have served as spike camps for past projects.

Having a Partnership Agreement with SJCC will allow completion of planned work and bring in additional resources for expediting the response to unanticipated work. This includes staffing to conduct a rapid response and removal of newly discovered patches of invasive weeds to prevent further spread, or to remove old fence lines on newly acquired property that can entrap wildlife or other unanticipated projects. The Partnership Agreement incorporates District review of work plans and a determination of which projects are best suited for the SJCC to ensure that the right types, sizes, and complexity of projects can be properly assigned.

Success criteria that will be used to determine whether to annually extend the contract include: adherence to the District's Best Management Practices for protecting and restoring the natural environment; ability to treat target species within the time allotted by District staff for species with highly specific treatment time windows; adherence to safe, judicious, work practices, including proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment; and timely communication of project milestones and/or issues.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended action has no immediate fiscal impact in FY25. If approved, a quarterly budget update in FY26 may include a reallocation of unspent funds to cover the cost of the recommendation if there are insufficient funds in relevant operating and project budgets. Funds for future fiscal year budgets beyond FY26 will be requested as a part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **April 28, 2021:** The Board approved a four-year Partnership Agreement with San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School to Complete Resource Management, Vegetation Management, and Maintenance Projects. ([R-21-52](#), [meeting minutes](#))

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This proposed action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act. Individual projects will undergo the appropriate level of environmental review.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Board approval, the General Manager will execute the Partnership Agreement with SJCC. After the first year of work, the General Manager will annually evaluate whether to extend the Agreement, for up to three subsequent fiscal years.

Attachments:

1. Examples of Potential San Jose Conservation Corps Projects

Responsible Department Head:

Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager for Visitor and Field Services

Prepared by/contact person:

Brandon Stewart, Land and Facilities Department Manager

Examples of Potential San Jose Conservation Corps Projects

Skyline Area FY 2026 Projects	Cost
<i>Montebello OSP – create emergency escape routes along Hwy 35 and Sherril House Driveway across from Skyline Ridge OSP parking</i>	\$15,000
<i>Foothills, Montebello and Los Trancos OSP's - create emergency escape route from Hwy 35 to Foothills OSP</i>	\$30,000
<i>El Corte Madera OSP – create emergency escape routes along Hwy 35 from Swett Rd to water tanks.</i>	\$15,000
<i>Thornewood, Russian Ridge, Coal Creek, Skyline Ridge, Montebello, Foothill, La Honda OSPs – manually pulling broom as component of IPM</i>	\$15,000
Total	\$75,000

Foothills Area FY 2026 Projects	Cost
<i>Phase II Forest Health Project – manual removal of invasive weeds pretreatment, manual removal and thinning of vegetation</i>	\$150,000
<i>Hendry's Creek Restoration Site Maintenance – invasive weed removal</i>	\$10,000
<i>Rancho San Antonio Preserve – Fuel reduction along trails and patrol roads on the northern boundary of Rancho San Antonio in cooperation with Los Altos Hills County Fire District</i>	\$30,000
<i>Cherry Springs Prescribed Burn Site Preparation – vegetation thinning, fuel ladder reduction</i>	\$35,000
Total	\$225,000