



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-64
Meeting 25-14
May 14, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 8

AGENDA ITEM

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

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider the following recommendations as supported by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee:

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 that reaches the following historic landscape features: (1) a rock placed at the time of August Schilling's ownership inscribed with the phrase "memento mori", (2) the former site of a "Redwood Temple", and (3) the former site of a "Redwood Pergola", and designate the trail for hiking and dogs-on-leash use and a portion of the trail for equestrian use, with the proposed trail name of Rock of Ages Trail.
2. Approve the addition of a new, 200-foot trail spur to connect the "Rock of Ages Trail" to a vista point and designate as open to hiking and dogs-on-leash.
3. Rename the Schilling Lake Trail to the Schilling Trail to reflect the natural meadow and forest succession of the former human-made lake that lies at the end of the trail.

COMMITTEE

- ☐ Action Plan & Budget
- ☐ Legislative, Funding & Public Affairs
- ☒ Planning & Natural Resources
- ☐ Real Property
- ☐ Ad-Hoc Committee

MEMBERS

- ☐ Ward 1 – Craig Gleason
- ☒ Ward 2 – Yoriko Kishimoto
- ☐ Ward 3 – Jed Cyr
- ☒ Ward 4 – Curt Riffle
- ☐ Ward 5 – Karen Holman
- ☐ Ward 6 – Margaret MacNiven
- ☒ Ward 7 – Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

COMMITTEE ACTION

Date: April 15, 2025

Action: The Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Committee approved with a 2-0-0 vote (Director Kishimoto was absent)

Item: R-25-48

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 4/15/2025 PNR Committee Report
2. 4/15/2025 Approved Meeting Minutes

COMMENTS

The committee approved forwarding the General Managers recommendation to the full Board for approval. They also requested staff investigate whether it is feasible to install a horse hitching post on the trail where equestrian use ends. A horse hitch will not fit right where equestrian use ends but can be placed closer to the former Schilling Lake site. The committee also recommended adding interpretive information regarding the artificial rocks that still exist from the Schilling era. After the PNR meeting, staff attended the annual Grandview Espinosa Road community meeting and presented the project. Community members who spoke supported the project and asked that the District monitor use to ensure it does not generate off trail use and trespass on private properties.



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-25-48
April 15, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

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

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *se*

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

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.

SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends that the Planning and Natural Resources Committee (PNR) forward a recommendation to the full Board of Directors (Board) to incorporate a legacy road into the formal trail network at Thornewood Open Space Preserve, designate the trail for hiking and dogs on leash use, and designate a portion of the trail for equestrian use, consistent with the connecting trails, and name the trail the Rock of Ages Trail. The General Manager recommends limiting equestrian access to only the first part of the trail due to a clump of three fallen redwood trunks which are suspended above the trail and leave only 4 to 5 feet of clearance under the trees. The General Manager also recommends approval of a conceptual route as a future trail connection from the top of the trail to the memento mori rock. The General Manager further recommends renaming the Schilling Lake Trail the Schilling Trail to avoid visitor confusion since the lake no longer exists. The proposed trail use designation is consistent with Board Policy 4.07, *Trail Use Policies*. The proposed trail names are consistent with the naming criteria specified in Board Policy 5.01, *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*. Pending Board approval, the trail addition, designation, and name would be implemented through new trail signs and maps and the mileage added to the trail GIS database.

HISTORY

Parts of Thornewood Open Space Preserve and adjoining parcels were once part of the Schilling family estate. August Schilling came to San Francisco in 1870 and worked for J. A. Folger. After starting in coffee, he made his fortune in spices and eventually had extensive land holdings in the Bay Area. By 1914, August Schilling (1854-1934) had purchased about 150 acres from Julian Thorne (the preserves namesake) and began developing his estate. The Schilling mansion, Portola Hall, was originally built by Edgar Preston and called Monte Bello, near Portola Road and Old La Honda Road on what is now private property and was demolished in 1952. Schilling also performed extensive landscaping work including vehicle access roads, pools, waterfalls, structures, and imitation rock concrete work. The remains of much of this work is still visible in Thornewood Open Space Preserve from the remains of the “Welcome Inn” and the “Welcome Inn Lake” next to the Bridle Trail and the “Lake in the Woods” which was a centerpiece of the rural part of the estate. The Lake in the Woods currently called Schilling Lake no longer exists, as it has filled in with sediment and is quickly turning into forest. On the property that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) acquired in 1986, two unique features that were part of the Schilling estate are still visible, the foundation of the former Redwood Temple and the “Rock of Ages” inscribed with “memento mori”. Memento mori is a Latin term that translates to “remember you must die”. The term has been used for many purposes, but the focus is on remembering to live and make use of your life because you will inevitably die. In some religious contexts it is also a warning not to sin in preparation for judgement day.

DISCUSSION

The former Schilling estate “automobile road” from the “Lake in the Woods” (Schilling Lake) to the site of a former redwood pergola is currently designated as a patrol road but is not a designated trail. It is posted with a “Not a Through Trail” sign. The trail is not a designated trail and is therefore not shown on preserve maps and does not have trail directional signs. The trail is open for public access and is currently used by hikers and dog walkers. Per Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) regulations, horses are not allowed since it is not a designated trail. The trail provides access to the base of the redwood temple and to the memento mori rock via a short spur trail created by visitor use. More frequent use of the site followed the placement of a geocache site on the rock. There is a landing at the top of the proposed trail that used to have a redwood pergola. While not as expansive as in Schilling’s time there is still a sliver of a view through the trees that have regrown since the estate was cleared of “undesirable” vegetation.

The General Manager recommends approving this as a designated trail, including the spur to the rock inscribed with memento mori, as a hiking and dog on leash trail. For consistency with the rest of the preserve use, equestrian use is proposed up to the spur to the memento mori rock. At this point District vehicle and horse traffic are blocked by a clump of three live fallen redwoods. While it is feasible to remove these trees, they are an interesting trail feature that is enjoyed by visitors. They are relatively easy to duck under, as there is 4 to 5 feet of clearance between the lowest tree and the trail. In the interest of retaining these trees the General Manager recommends only allowing hiking and dog on leash use above the trees. Due to the retention of these trees as a trail feature the trail will no longer be designated and maintained as a patrol road. The road is currently rarely used as a patrol or maintenance route. (Attachment 1)

The General Manager also recommends approving a conceptual route as a future trail connection from the top of the trail to the memento mori rock. While the existing use trail provides access to the rock it does not meet District trail standards, so it is desirable to construct a new trail segment in the future. This segment is relatively short, only 100 to 200 feet and would be constructed through a disturbed area almost entirely covered by invasive St John's wort which was likely planted in the Schilling era. (Attachment 1)

Staff were solicited for trail name suggestions and then staff selected preferred names for consideration of the PNR. Per Board Policy 5.01 for [Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition](#), Preserve trails shall ordinarily be named after: a) geographical, botanical, or zoological identification, or b) historical persons, uses, or events associated with the site. All of the proposed trail names fall under the historic persons, uses, or events category. The "Rock of Ages Trail" is the suggested name for the proposed trail between Schilling Lake and the site of the former redwood pergola vista point. An alternate name is the "Memento Mori Trail". Both names are in regard to the polished rock inscribed with "memento mori" placed by August Schilling as part of the estate. Per his self-published photo book *Portola Hall-Hills*, the rock was originally located at the Arden Hills and placed at its current location. It is likely that Arden Hills refers to the Coyote Hills which are adjacent to the Arden salt ponds owned and operated by Schilling. That book describes the inscribed rock as the "Rock of Ages." Mortar holes are present on the rock which suggest that the rock was a grinding rock used by native people in its original location.

Over time, Schilling Lake has filled in with sediment and is no longer recognizable as a lake. Most of the time there is no visible standing water. Water still flows through the site to a spillway that is functional but is scheduled for repair. The Board reviewed management options for Schilling Lake and selected a passive succession of the lake into a meadow and a forest ([R10-58](#)). Now that the lake no longer exists, the current trail name, the "Schilling Lake Trail" leads visitors to expect a woodland lake at the end of the trail. Therefore, a trail name change is proposed as a truth in advertising measure. The proposed name to replace the Schilling Lake Trail is simply the Schilling Trail (Attachment 1), which still recognizes August Schilling's role in developing and preserving the estate. An alternate name is the Schilling Spice Trail which retains the Schilling name but also recognizes what he was most famous for, the Schilling Spice Company. Signing will remain at the former lake indicating its historic name and explaining the process of succession.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is sufficient funding in the FY25 budget to cover the costs of the recommended actions.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- **October 22, 1986:** Board approved the purchase and addition of the Zand II property to the Thornewood Open Space Preserve and adopted an interim use and management plan. ([R-86-93](#), [meeting minutes](#)).
- **April 28, 2010:** Board adopted a minor intervention long-term management approach to Schilling Lake ([R10-58](#), [minutes](#))
- **June 22, 2022:** FYI update on the natural ecological succession of Schilling Lake ([FYI](#))

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. A meeting will be held with the Grandview Espinosa community following the PNR meeting and prior to a full board meeting

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The designation of the existing patrol road as a publicly accessible trail is Categorical Exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities. The existing patrol road is an existing facility and the proposed use as a trail would result in a less intensive use than as patrol access road. The designation of the existing use trail to the memento mori rock is Categorical Exempt in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities. The conceptual alignment to extend the current trail 100 to 200 feet is consistent with the Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program (OSMRP) (SCH #2021080129), adopted by the Board on September 22, 2021 (Resolution No. 21-32) The selection of a trail names is not a Project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NEXT STEPS

Following Committee consideration, the General Manager will forward the recommended trail designations and trail names to the full Board of Directors for consideration and approval.

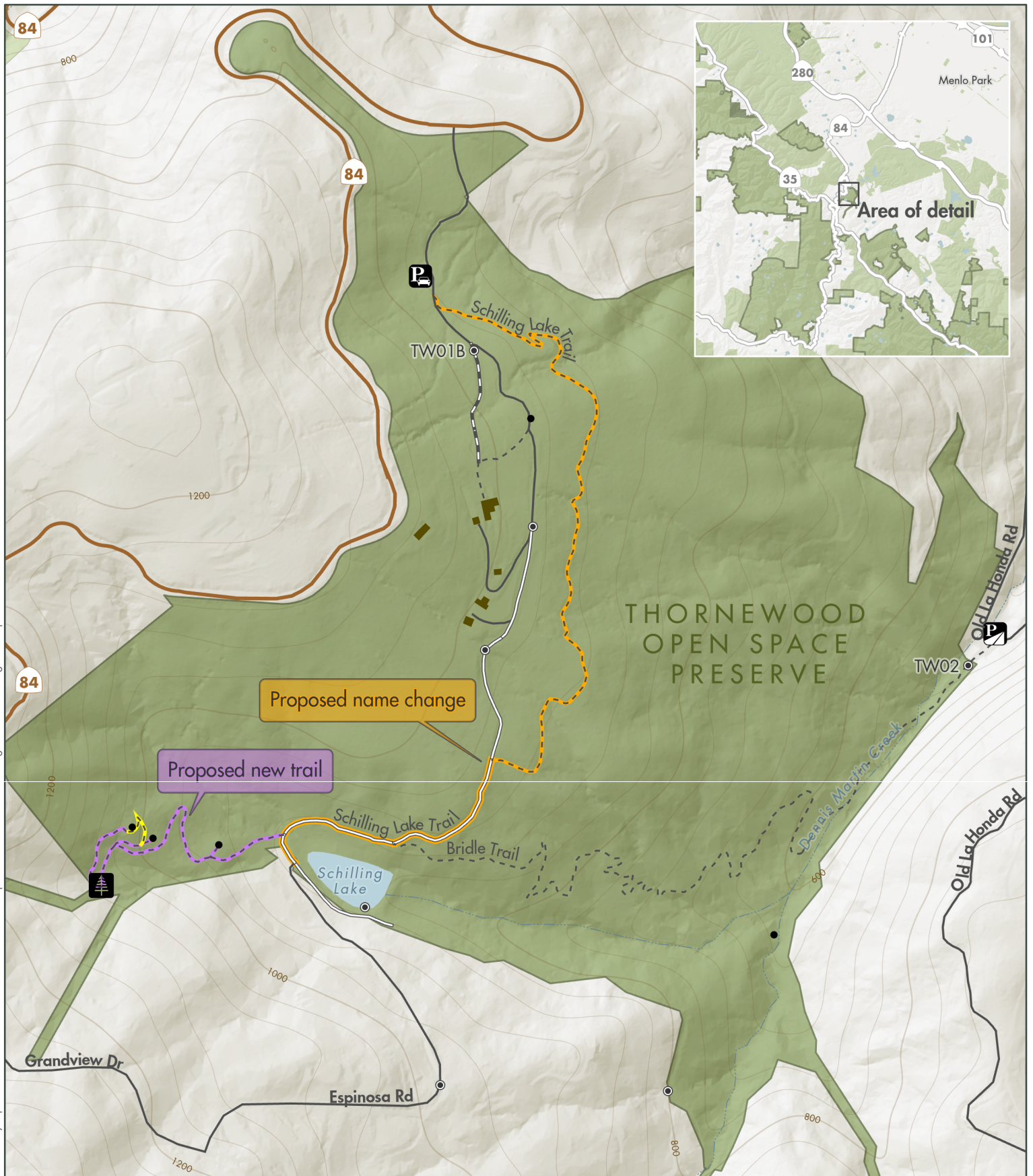
Attachments

1. Trail Map

Responsible Department Head:
Ana Ruiz, General Manager

Prepared by/Contact person:
Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager

Graphics prepared by:
Elizabeth Plumart, GIS Intern, IST Department



Thornewood Trail Designation

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|
|  | Midpen preserve |  | Proposed new trail |
|  | Other protected land |  | Conceptual connector |
|  | Unpaved seasonal road |  | Proposed trail name change |

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
4/7/2025

Feet
0 250 500



Path: G:\Projects\Thornewood\RockOfAgesTrail\RockOfAgesTrail.aprx

Created By: eplumart



Thornewood Trail Designation

- Midpen preserve
- Proposed new trail
- Conceptual connector
- Trail
- Point of interest



Notable flora

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
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Feet
0 50 100





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.

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.

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April 15, 2025**

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

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- 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**

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