



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-65
Meeting 25-14
May 14, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 9

AGENDA ITEM

Proposed Purchase of the 273.5-acre Pratt Trust Property located in San Mateo County (APN: 080-360-010) as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Determine that the recommended actions are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as set out in the staff report.
2. Adopt a Resolution authorizing the purchase of the Pratt Trust Property for \$4,375,000 with a corresponding authorization for a Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget increase in the same amount.
3. Adopt a Preliminary Use and Management Plan, as set out in the staff report.
4. Withhold dedication of the Pratt Trust Property as public open space at this time.

SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends purchasing the 273.5-acre Pratt Trust Property (Property) at a price of \$4,375,000 (\$15,996 per acre) as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Russian Ridge OSP or Preserve). The following report includes a description of the Property, a Preliminary Use and Management Plan, findings of the environmental review, the purchase terms and condition, and financial considerations. Currently, there is no budget allocation for this project. If approved, a budget adjustment of \$4,375,000 to the Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25) budget would be required to proceed with the acquisition.

DISCUSSION

Property Description and Regional Context (see attached map)

The District proposes to purchase the 273.5-acre Property consisting of one legal parcel. The Property is located off Alpine Road in unincorporated San Mateo County, 2.5 miles from Skyline Boulevard, and is bordered by the District's 3,491-acre Russian Ridge OSP to the north, the District's 2,144-acre Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve to the east, and private properties to the west and south. The community of La Honda sits approximately 6.5 miles to the northwest. This purchase is eligible for Measure AA funding and advances land conservation opportunities in Measure AA Portfolio #8: *La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion* by permanently protecting woodlands, shrublands, and open pasturelands with approximately 44 acres of redwood forest and two intermittent streams within the Upper San Gregorio Creek watershed.

Land Uses and Improvements

The Property is vacant with no utilities and unimproved aside from an old ranch road network in fair to overgrown condition that provides access to the western and southern portions of the Property from Alpine Road. Recent uses on the Property include cattle grazing and private open space. There is one shed and limited grazing infrastructure on the Property.

Habitat and Natural Resources Value

The Property is part of a larger patch of conifer forest with a mix of evergreen and deciduous hardwood, shrubland and grassland along the southern and eastern edges. The Property provides habitat for a number of species associated with the San Gregorio watershed, including deer, coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions. A wide variety of small mammals, birds, and other species occupy or migrate through it. The Property also contains prime quality habitat for the American badger, a species of special concern in California, as well as potential habitat for California red-legged frog and San Francisco garter snake, a federally designated endangered species.

Water Resources and Rights

Approximately a mile of an intermittent stream, which connects to Alpine Creek to the west, weaves its way along the northern boundary of the Property. Roughly ¼ mile of another intermittent stream also connecting to Alpine Creek cuts across the southeast corner of the Property. The Property has adjudicated water rights, a private, unpermitted well, and three springs, two along the northern boundary and one at the southern property boundary. The San Gregorio Creek watershed and all of its surface waters were adjudicated by the San Mateo County Court in 1989. The adjudication allocated water rights to the Property owner via Point of Diversion 76 (POD 76) and Point of Diversion 77 (POD 77) for domestic (500 gallons per day) and irrigation (18,700 gallons per day) uses.

COASTAL ANNEXATION AREA SERVICE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Property is within the boundaries of the District's Service Plan for the San Mateo County Coastal Annexation Area (Service Plan). The Service Plan and conditions approved by the San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) established policies for the District's Coastsides Protection Program (Program). The Program guides the District's coastal purchases and use and management of open space land within the Service Plan Area.

The District's coastal land purchases are subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the San Mateo County Farm Bureau and the District. In accordance with the memorandum, District staff presented information on the proposed purchase at a Farm Bureau meeting on April 7, 2025. The Farm Bureau encouraged staff to continue cattle use on the property (e.g., as a bull pen for the District's neighboring grazing tenant). In response to these comments, if the use is deemed feasible by the District and of interest to the adjacent Mindego Grazing Unit tenant, the District would add the property to the Mindego Grazing Unit to allow cattle grazing. Feasibility will depend in part on the available forage and water source to support a sufficient head of cattle and the amount of infrastructure investment necessary to validate the effort and cost.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Planning Considerations

The Property consists of one parcel located in unincorporated San Mateo County with a General Plan designation of Forest, Timber Production, with a zoning designation of Timber Land Preserve Zone (TPZ). Natural resource management, habitat preservation, and low intensity recreation are allowable uses within this land use designation. Staff has requested that the San Mateo County Planning Commission confirm that the acquisition of the Property by the District for open space complies with the County's General Plan.

If purchased, the Property will be incorporated into the surrounding Preserve and the Preliminary Use and Management Plan as set out in this report will be implemented. Subsequent planning and further environmental review for future uses that are consistent with the District's mission and Basic Policy would be conducted in accordance with the District's Service Plan, including consultation with appropriate agencies, organizations, and adjoining landowners.

Williamson Act Considerations

The Property is not subject to a Land Conservation Agreement under the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (also known as the Williamson Act).

Preliminary Use and Management Plan

The Preliminary Use and Management Plan (PUMP) establishes a status quo land management approach in the interim between the purchase of a property and the completion of a future long-term plan. The PUMP takes effect at the close of escrow and remains effective until changes warrant an amendment or development of a comprehensive Preserve plan to include this Property. If changes to land use or the physical environment are proposed in the future, the plan would be subject to further environmental review and public input.

Name:	Name the Property as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.
Dedication:	Withhold dedication of the subject Property as open space at this time.
Coastal Service Plan:	Operate and manage the Property in compliance with the District's Service Plan for the Coastal Annexation Area and the mitigation measures adopted pursuant to the Service Plan's Environmental Impact Report.
Public Access:	Designate the Property as closed to public use at this time.
Signs and Site Security:	Install District signage, including boundary and operational signs, as needed.
Fences and Gates:	Upgrade and maintain gates and fencing as necessary to prevent unauthorized entry.

Roads and Trails:	Continue to maintain existing dirt roads in a serviceable condition in accordance with the District's adopted Resource Management Policies standards and Open Space Maintenance and Restoration program.
Patrol:	Routinely patrol Property using the existing dirt access roads.
Grazing:	If deemed feasible by the District and of interest by the Mindego Ranch grazing tenant, add the property to the Mindego Ranch grazing unit and continue cattle grazing on the Property consistent with the District's adopted Resource Management Policies and Best Management Practices.
Resource Management:	Maintain the Property in its natural condition. Conduct plant and animal management activities consistent with the District's adopted Resource Management Policies, Integrated Pest Management Program Guidance Manual, Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program, Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, Best Management Practices, and regulatory permits as needed.
Water Resources:	Protect the creeks on the Property consistent with the District's adopted Resource Management Policies and Best Management Practices.
Water Rights:	Comply with division of adjudicated water rights from San Gregorio Creek stream system POD 76 and POD 77.
Wildland Fuel Management:	Implement standard District-wide fuel management and defensible space practices consistent with the District's adopted Wildland Fire Resiliency Program.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Project Description

The project consists of the purchase of the 273.5-acre Property as an addition to the District's open space preserve system, as set forth in the Purchase and Sale Agreement, and the concurrent adoption of a PUMP. The adoption of a PUMP establishes a status quo land management approach, with no expansion or changes to the Property's existing use as open space and maintains it in a natural condition. The Property is currently grazed and, if feasible, that use would continue. As directed in the proposed PUMP, maintenance and minor resource management activities will be conducted in accordance with adopted District policies and programs and their associated CEQA documents.

The Property is within the boundaries of the District's Service Plan for the San Mateo County Coastal Annexation Area. The Service Plan and the Service Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), certified in 2004, includes policies, guidelines, and mitigations to ensure compatibility with the County General Plan and Local Coastal Program. The actions proposed will be conducted in compliance with the Service Plan and FEIR.

Any minor erosion and sediment control measures, wildland fuel management, and minor resource management activities implemented by the District or tenants as part of the PUMP will be conducted in accordance with the District's approved Resource Management Policies and the mitigation measures adopted as part of the Resource Management Policies' FEIR, and in accordance with applicable regulatory permits. Any invasive species control will be conducted in accordance with the District's adopted Integrated Pest Management Policies and Integrated Pest Management Program Guidance Manual, Best Management Practices, and the mitigation measures adopted as part of the Integrated Pest Management Policies' FEIR.

CEQA Determination

The District concludes that the purchase of the Property and adoption of the PUMP is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Article 19, Sections 15301, 15316, and 15325 of the CEQA Guidelines as follows:

Section 15301 exempts the repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond the existing uses at the time of the lead agency's determination. The PUMP will maintain the Property as status quo with no expansion or changes to its existing uses as open space lands with the possibility of continued cattle grazing, complying with the District's adopted Resource Management Policies, Integrated Pest Management Program Guidance Manual, Best Management Practices, and regulatory permits as applicable. The PUMP includes minor site improvements, such as signage and fencing, as needed. The PUMP also includes maintenance of the existing roads as necessary, as well as maintenance of or minor alterations to the property for wildland fuel management and other natural resource management activities in accordance with the District's adopted policies and programs and their associated CEQA documents.

Section 15316 exempts the acquisition of land in order to create parks if the land is in a natural condition, and the management plan proposes to keep the area in a natural condition. The PUMP for the Property specifies that the land will remain in a natural condition and will be designated as an addition to the District's Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.

Section 15325 exempts transfers of ownership of interests in land to preserve open space. This acquisition will transfer fee ownership of the Property to the District to ensure that the open space will be preserved and incorporated into Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The 273.5-acre Pratt Property is proposed for purchase at a sale price of \$4,375,000 (\$15,996 per acre) based upon an independent fair market appraisal commissioned by the District. The Property would be purchased as-is on an all-cash basis. Escrow would close on or before May 30, 2025.

FISCAL IMPACT

Land acquisitions brought before the Board for approval include a budget adjustment/increase to the adopted budget. If approved, an increase of \$4,375,000 for the acquisition to the FY25 budget is required.

Pratt Trust Property Purchase Amount (including \$10,000 option deposit)	4,375,000
Total Land purchases approved to date for FY25	12,157,500
Total FY25 Land Purchases (if approved)	\$16,532,500

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 08, La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of the Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA08 La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of the Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion Portfolio Allocation:	\$15,347,000
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 04/17/25):	(\$2,155,655)
Encumbrances:	\$0
Pratt Property Land Conservation	(\$4,375,000)
Remaining FY25 Project Budgets:	\$0
Future MAA08 project costs (projected through FY28):	\$0
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$6,530,655)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$8,816,346

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 08 allocation, costs to date, and the fiscal impact related to the Property purchase.

MAA08 La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of the Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion Portfolio Allocation:	\$15,347,000
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
08-001 Folger Property Purchase	(\$2,153,910)
08-002 Jodicke Property Acquisition	(\$1,745)
08-003 Pratt Trust Property Acquisition	(\$4,375,000)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$6,530,655)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$8,816,346

Coastside Protection Area Fiscal Considerations

The Property is located within the service area of San Mateo County Fire (County Fire). Under the terms of the District/County Fire agreement, the District would pay \$147.78 the first year and annually increase the amount by 2%.

Similarly, the Property is located in the service area of the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District (School) and is subject to a School service fee per an agreement between the District and School. Under the terms of the District/School agreement, the District would pay the School \$914.15 during the first year and annually increase the amount by 2%.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Real Property Committee did not review the purchase due to the compressed timeline of this acquisition.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice for this meeting was provided as required by the Brown Act. A copy of the agenda for this meeting was mailed to property owners of land located adjacent to or surrounding the Property, to interested parties, and to those listed on the Coastside Protection Area mailing list.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, the General Manager will direct staff to proceed with the close of escrow for the purchase of the Property and implement the PUMP. The District's Skyline Field Office will manage the Property as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.

Attachments:

1. Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of Purchase and Sale Agreement, Amending the Fiscal Year 2024-25 General Fund Capital Budget, Authorizing the General Manager or Other Officer to Execute Certificates of Acceptance of Grant to District, and Authorizing General Manager to Execute any and all Other Documents Necessary or Appropriate to Closing of the Transaction (Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve – Lands of Pratt Trust)
2. Pratt Trust Property Location Map

Responsible Department Head:
Allen Ishibashi, Real Property Manager

Prepared by/contact person:
Jasmine Leong, Real Property Agent II

Graphics prepared by:
Francisco Tapia, GIS Technician

RESOLUTION 25-__

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF PURCHASE AND SALE AGREEMENT, AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 MEASURE AA FUND CAPITAL BUDGET, AUTHORIZING GENERAL MANAGER OR OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICER TO EXECUTE CERTIFICATE OF ACCEPTANCE AND GRANT TO DISTRICT, AND AUTHORIZING GENERAL MANAGER TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL OTHER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE TO CLOSING OF THE TRANSACTION (RUSSIAN RIDGE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE - LANDS OF PRATT TRUST APN 080-360-010)

The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District does hereby resolve as follows:

SECTION ONE. The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) does hereby accept the offer contained in that certain Purchase and Sale Agreement (Agreement) between Gary E. Loebner as Trustee of the Melvyn Crawford Pratt Trust, as to an undivided 26.5% interest and Gary E. Loebner as Trustee of the Alden Willard Pratt Trust, as to an undivided 73.5% interest, and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, a copy of which Agreement is attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof, and authorizes the President of the Board of Directors, General Manager, or other appropriate officer to execute the Agreement and all related transactional documents on behalf of the District to acquire the real property described therein, Assessor’s Parcel Number 080-360-010 (Pratt Trust Property).

SECTION TWO. The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District authorizes the expenditure of \$4,375,000.00 covering the purchase of the Pratt Trust Property, including a deposit of \$10,000.00.

SECTION THREE. The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District does hereby amend the Budget and Action Plan for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District for Fiscal Year 2024-25 by increasing the Measure AA Fund Capital budget in the amount of \$4,375,000.00. Except as herein modified, the FY 2024-25 Budget and Action Plan, Resolution No. 24-18 as amended, shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION FOUR. The General Manager, President of the Board of Directors, or other appropriate officer is authorized to execute a Certificate of Acceptance and the Grant Deed on behalf of the District.

SECTION FIVE. The General Manager or the General Manager’s designee (Real Property Manager) is authorized to provide notice of acceptance to the seller, execute all escrow docs, and to extend escrow if necessary.

SECTION SIX. The General Manager or the General Manager’s designee (Real Property Manager) is authorized to expend up to \$10,000.00 to cover the cost of title insurance, escrow fees, survey and miscellaneous costs related to this transaction.

SECTION SEVEN. The General Manager and General Counsel are further authorized to approve any technical revisions to the attached Agreement and documents, which do not involve any material change to any term of the Agreement or documents, which are necessary or appropriate to the closing or implementation of this transaction.

* * * * *

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on May 14, 2025, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following vote:

- AYES:**
- NOES:**
- ABSTAIN:**
- ABSENT:**

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Secretary
Board of Directors

Jed Cyr, President
Board of Directors

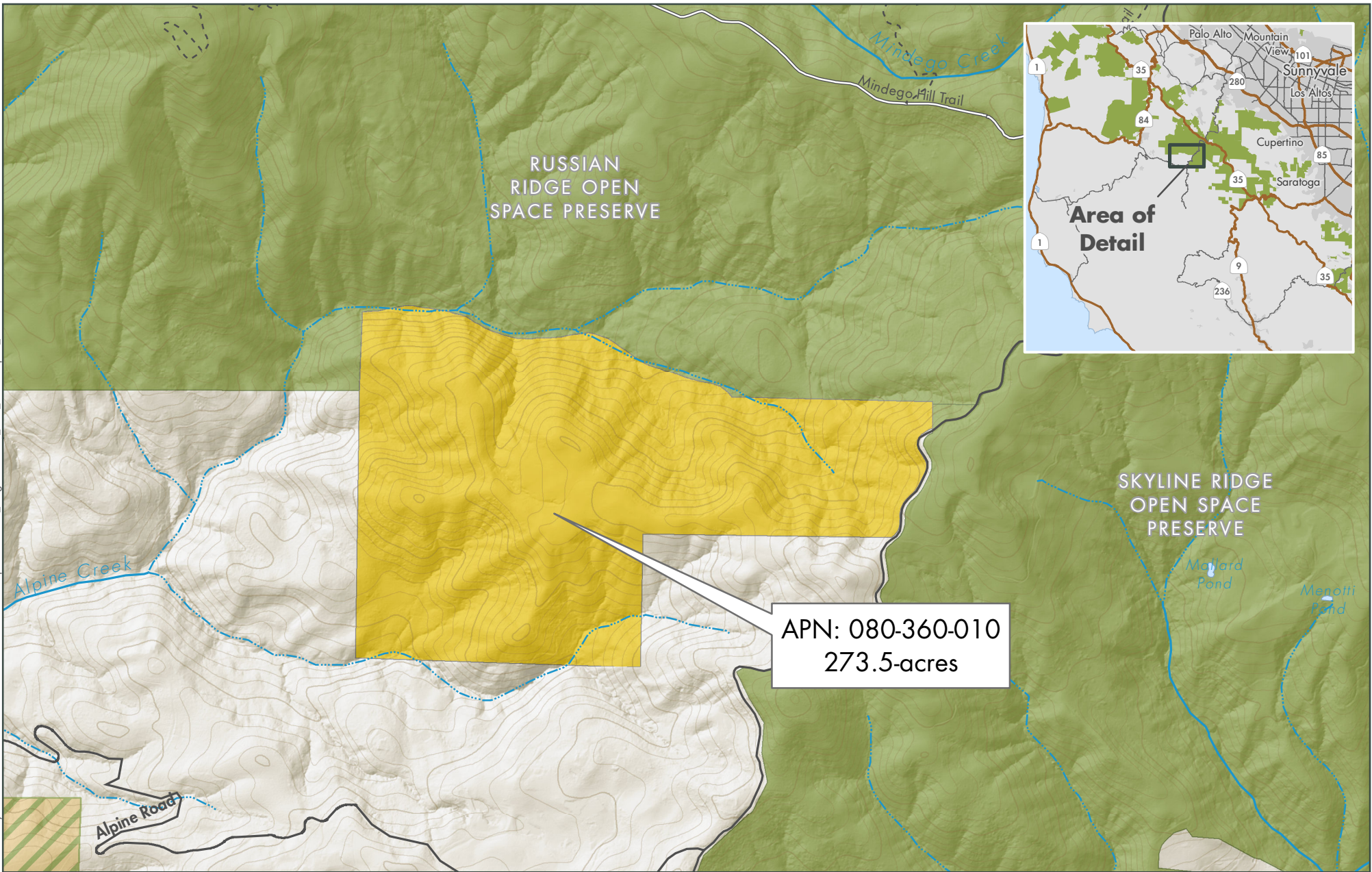
APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

Maria Soria, District Clerk

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Pratt Trust Property

- MROSD Preserves
- Pratt Trust Property
- Private Property
- MROSD Easement Over Land Trust

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/28/2020



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.