



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Fiscal Year 2013-14 Accomplishments



FISCAL YEAR 2013-14 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Mission Statement:

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity; protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

ACCESS AND EDUCATION

COMPLETED:

- Permitting and construction of the El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve 69-space parking area, solar-powered automatic gate, connector trail, and installation, watering, and maintenance of new landscaping, and hosted its grand opening with nearly 100 attendees.
- Permitting and construction of the Mindego Gateway 20-space parking area in the Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.
- Successful outreach to local educational institutions for Midpen's Resource Development Grant program, and awarded seven research grants in support of a Fisheries Habitat Assessment, Cultural Resource Assessment and Wildlife Camera Trap Study.
- Volunteer recruitment and projects, including:
 - 87 outdoor service projects with volunteers
 - 28 new volunteers in the Advanced Resource Management Squad (ARMS) program
 - 48 new recruits for volunteer trail patrol for a total of 120 active volunteer trail patrol members
- Fire safety improvements to the Monte Bello campground by clearing flammable vegetation around the site.
- Watershed improvements in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve, including culvert removal on Blue Blossom, road removal and drainage improvements on Blue Blossom and Springboard Trails.
- Asphalt paving of the Mora Trail road in Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve to improve vehicle and hiker access.
- Fire safety improvements, including 100' clearance around the Hawthorns structures and brushing along the access roads at the Hawthorn historic complex in Windy Hill Open Space Preserve.
- 257 docent programs with focus on walking, hiking, biking, nature exploration, bird watching, canine hikes, family walks and more.

- Educational programs for 823 students on 33 field trips at the Daniels Nature Center.
- Design and construction of a new chicken coop at Deer Hollow Farm, providing enhanced educational/teaching features.
- Installation of automatic gates at the Whittemore Gulch parking lot at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.
- Replacement of a failed culvert on Ward Road in the Long Ridge Open Space Preserve to protect stream water quality in the Pescadero watershed.
- Annual equipment purchases and outfitting to modernize the fleet and provide expanded capability to manage and restore the preserves.
- Improvements to grade reversals and drainage on Methuselah Trail in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve to protect downstream water quality.
- Installation of stile, fences and signs to complete the Molder Trail crossing on north/south sides of Skyline Boulevard adjacent to El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Repair of a storm-damaged culvert on Purisima Creek Road to protect water quality.
- Rental structure improvements, including installation of new propane tank, deck safety improvements and other repairs at multiple locations.
- Fire safety brushing of the Monte Bello fire break and Gordon Mill/Timberview Loop, in addition to other brush clearing for visitor access on trails and fire safety around structures and in preserves.
- Brush clearance and rock spreading on patrol road/tenant access driveway at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve to improve access.
- Construction of a new Peters Creek bridge in Long Ridge Open Space Preserve and removal of the old bridge to ensure safe public access.
- Fence installation on the property boundary with The Sequoias at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and the Chestnut Orchard in Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve to prevent preserve visitors from inadvertently entering onto adjacent private property.
- Eagle Scout project support for installation of a seasonal trail closure stile in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Bridge and puncheon assessments and improvements District-wide to maintain access and user safety.
- Remedial work required to open a failed culvert on Alpine Road, with oversight from San Mateo County, to prevent further damage and provide temporary public access.

- Installation of new gates at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve and Stevens Canyon Ranch area in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve.
- Rebuilding of the Alpine Pond foot bridge for user safety.
- Promotion of the website for information, resulting in 1,072,873 Page Views: 61% of visits were from new visitors to the website, 19% used a mobile device to access the site (52% increase from previous year), and 9% used a tablet to access the site (21% increase from previous year).
- Promotion of Facebook Page, resulting in increase in “likes” from 391 to 2,075 (430% increase) with 75% of new page “likes” posting in March.
- Promotion of Twitter feed, resulting in increase in followers from 860 to 1,231 (43% increase).
- Participation in 24 weekend community events throughout the District for diverse audiences, including families, health, seniors, 5-K runs, nature enthusiasts, and more.
- Attendance at 6 employer health fairs to encourage the use of open space to maintain overall physical health.
- Coordination of two Spanish-speaking interpretive hikes in honor of Spanish Heritage Month.
- Implementation of two 12-week ad card programs to spread the word about public access to Midpen trails and preserves on Caltrain and SamTrans buses.
- Founders Day Festival in celebration of Midpen’s 40th anniversary with an estimated 600 attendees at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve.
- Participation in the Los Gatos History Museum Exhibit, “The Evolution of Green: Environmental Activism in Santa Clara County.”
- Recognition of 500 Midpen Volunteers and 18,000 hours of service at the 2013 Volunteer Recognition Event.
- Creation of new “Visiting Preserves with your Dog” brochure highlighting preserves and trails open to dogs and giving tips on dog etiquette and safe practices for hiking with your dog.
- Translation of “Explore your Backyard” general brochure into Chinese, Korean, and Spanish.
- New website pages for information about the Vision Plan and Measure AA.
- Monthly “Plug into Nature” e-newsletter.
- “Art of the Trail” video featuring Midpen’s expert trail planning, design, and construction practices.

- Celebration of Black History Month with a special event at Ravenswood/Cooley Landing in partnership with the City of East Palo Alto.
- Participation in seven local cable television and radio programs to highlight Midpen's trails and preserves, including two in Spanish, one in Mandarin, and one profiling easy access trails in the preserves.
- Design and installation of the Gene Sheehan memorial plaque at the Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve.
- Mary Davey Memorial redwood log bench (utilizing a salvaged redwood tree trunk from the El Corte de Madera Creek Staging Area project), an etched boulder, and spur trail at the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve.
- Ranger enforcement of ordinances through verbal warnings and citations and emergency response to 123 incidents, including:
 - 36 bicycle accidents
 - 26 other medical incidents
 - 18 pedestrian/running accidents
 - 11 vehicle accidents
 - 8 wildland fires
 - 7 lost persons searches
 - 8 fatalities
 - 7 animal incidents
 - 2 equestrian accidents
- Launching of the "Take a Hike" program to feature Midpen's monthly hiking and biking programs to 52 local corporations, non-profits, and government agencies.
- Fremont Older House and Garden tours with 125 tour participants.
- Wingding Festival in partnership with Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve.

MAJOR MILESTONES ACCOMPLISHED:

- Design of the Mt. Umunhum trail alignment and initiation of construction of the four-mile trail from the Bald Mountain parking area to the summit.
- Mindego Ranch Use and Management Plan and Environmental Review.
- Design and permitting of the Bald Mountain 24-space parking area.
- Design and began installation of entrance signs with the new Midpen logo.
- Permitting and construction of the first phase of the Oljon Trail in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve.

- Design and permitting of the Mindego Hill Trail and Ancient Oaks Trail in the Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.
- Growth of the geo-caching program to 3,000 online logs.
- Initial phase of the Permits database project to enhance management and monitoring of over 2,500 permits per year.

IN PROGRESS:

- Trail easement discussions for the Ravenswood Bay Trail Gap with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and Caltrans, in conjunction with the Cities of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park.
- Process for the Bear Creek Stables Request for Proposals/Lease.
- Engagement in Bay Area Healthy Parks Healthy People Initiative with first Saturday of the month programs, including new Pilates in the Park program.
- 80% complete design documents for Radar Tower repairs at Mt. Umunhum.
- Partnership with New America Media to expand outreach to diverse communities and partnered on luncheon for ethnic media leaders in the Bay Area.
- Partnerships with Pacific Council of the Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of Northern California to develop programs that encourage volunteerism and outdoor nature programs.

PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

COMPLETED:

- Collaboration with the U.S. Navy to ensure successful remediation and restoration of a wetland basin at Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Study Area.
- Scientific information analysis in support of the Vision Plan, including:
 - constraints and opportunities analysis
 - baseline inventories
 - assessment of conservation value of lands within Midpen's boundary, including existing biological, cultural, agricultural, and recreational conditions
- Mapping of 100 special status species and development of a special status species map book to provide staff with a visual guide of all known locations of rare species on Midpen preserves.
- Demolition and site restoration work at the former Powell property in the Montebello Open Space Preserve, including 5 structures, dump site and road restoration.
- Repair to Pond DR08 in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve to protect endangered species habitat and provide water for livestock.

- Mercury mine waste stabilization project at Hicks Flat in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve to protect water quality in San Francisco Bay
- Successful opposition to legislation (AB904), which would have eroded local government authority and oversight of timber harvesting in the Santa Cruz Mountains.
- Submittal of a comment letter to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation on new regulations regarding rodenticides with detailed information about possible effects of rodenticides on bobcats in Rancho San Antonio and other preserves.
- Final year of contract work on the Skyline Ridge Tree Farm Restoration project, which is now in a maintenance phase.
- Installation of 12 nest boxes at the top of Mount Umunhum to provide nesting locations for a locally rare bird, the Purple Martin.
- Coordination with University of California researchers on the unusual finding of red-bellied newts in the Stevens Creek watershed, which resulted in a publication in the Journal of Herpetology and recommendations that this population be protected.
- Rare plant treasure hunts with the California Native Plant Society in two preserves leading to rediscovery of several populations of rare plants.
- Removal of an abandoned 80,000 gallon water tank in Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve to improve the viewshed.
- Removal of cattails at Alpine Pond to improve visibility and at Sausal Pond to improve water flow through the spillway.
- Brushing of access to Mindego Hill utilizing updated standards for endangered species protection to improve access and increase fire protection.
- Participation in a Big Basin State Park controlled burn with Cal Fire to observe forest burning and practice fire suppression skills.

MAJOR MILESTONE ACCOMPLISHED:

- Demolition of military structures and partial site restoration at Mt. Umunhum funded by \$1.2 million federal grant.
- Public competitive process to select new grazing tenants for Driscoll and McDonald Ranches at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, and work with tenants to construct grazing infrastructure improvements.
- Development of draft Integrated Pest Management Policies and preparation of a Draft Integrated Pest Management Guidance Manual to guide future pest control at Midpen buildings and facilities, for fire management, on grazing and agriculture properties, and in natural areas.

- Engineering evaluation of six vehicle bridges and identified the Harkins Bridge in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve for replacement.
- Hazardous materials testing, preliminary bat surveys, and historical assessments for six priority structure demolitions.
- Field surveys and design review for a fish habitat improvement project on San Gregorio Creek, in support of a San Mateo County Resource Conservation District grant application.
- Design and permitting for improvements to a tenant driveway and water system at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.
- Confirmation of the location of 40 abandoned vehicles in the Skyline area as the first step in creating a removal plan for abandoned vehicles.

IN PROGRESS:

- Design contracts and design development for Pond DR05 in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve Pond to protect endangered species and provide water for livestock
- Sudden Oak Death research partnership; to date, Midpen has provided \$52,500 in funding to support research on preventative treatments for Sudden Oak Death that has been matched by \$122,250 in funding from US Forest Service.
- Research study on San Francisco Garter Snake distribution and abundance at Mindego Ranch in Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve through a contract with the U.S. Geological Survey.
- Continued control of Slender False Brome on various Midpen Preserves and adjacent private property and entered into a contract with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to work with private property owners on Slender False Brome control, while Midpen continues control on Open Space Preserves.
- Work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to amend the Recovery Permit for the San Francisco Garter Snake and the California Red-legged Frog to expand the coverage area to all of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve and the Mindego Ranch area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, to allow for Midpen's maintenance, restoration, and infrastructure improvement activities, while protecting and enhancing habitat for sensitive species.
- Weed management and improvement of grazing infrastructure at Mindego Ranch.
- Work with grazing tenants to reduce the number of livestock on all 10,800 acres currently within the conservation grazing program in response to severe drought conditions.
- Removal of five large eucalyptus trees at Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve and continued native plant restoration actions.

- Continued exotic vegetation management in numerous locations and began a substantial broom removal project at Coal Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Continued assistance to state and county agencies in efforts to eradicate marijuana grows to enhance public safety and protect water quality in the preserves.
- Continued efforts related to Lehigh Quarry to protect recreational, environmental, scenic, and health values for the public, as well as staff, at Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve.

ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

COMPLETED:

- Purchase of the approximately 148 acre INE Ranch as an addition to Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, protecting the scenic ridgeline, Stevens Creek watershed, habitat for red-legged frog, and allowing for a potential public trail connection to Upper Stevens Creek County Park.
- Purchase of the approximately 11 acre Lobner Trust as an addition to Monte Bello Open Space Preserve in partnership with Santa Clara County Parks.
- Receipt of gifts of “Redwood Park” parcels from 4 owners totaling 0.8 acres as additions to Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve and a 0.2 acre gift as an addition to Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve.
- Recording of the 0.3 acre California Water Company trail easement (Molder Trail) connecting El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve to the California Riding and Hiking Trail (Ridge Trail) on California Water Company’s Bear Gulch Watershed Property.
- Entered into a Lease and Management Agreement for a one year extension with additional one year option with Peninsula Open Space Trust to manage the Hendrys Creek Property located adjacent to the Cathedral Oaks Area of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve.

MAJOR MILESTONE ACCOMPLISHED:

- Lease and Management Agreement with Peninsula Open Space Trust for the 308 acre Apple Orchard Event Center properties located adjacent to La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Hawthorns historic site and structures assessment, as well as temporary site stabilization measures, including bee removal, rodent control, and roof wrapping.

IN PROGRESS:

- Multiple meetings with neighborhood residents to discuss the proposed Ridge Vineyard Exchange and initiated a hydrology study to further inform the environmental review of

the project which will provide additions to Monte Bello Open Space Preserve and implement conservation easements to restrict further development on areas used for viticulture.

GENERAL/MIDPEN-WIDE SUPPORT OF MISSION

COMPLETED:

- Open Space Vision Plan with significant public, Community Advisory Committee, and scientific input, identifying 54 major projects for the next 30 years and establishing 25 top priority actions.
- Research, planning, and documentation for the Board's decision to place a General Obligation Bond measure on the June 3, 2014 ballot, including cost-estimating for a detailed Expenditure Plan for the 25 top Priority Actions of the Vision Plan.
- Update to the Strategic Plan, guiding the annual Action Plan and Budget development and Vision Plan implementation.
- Update to Midpen's Land Use Ordinances.
- Remodel of the AO2 new lease space, and relocation of 21 staff members to accommodate space needs due to changes in Administrative Office staffing.
- Comprehensive changes to Midpen's Credit Card Program to enhance financial control and streamline program management and procedures.
- Midyear action plan and budget update, implementing revisions to streamline the process and report production.
- New program to auction Midpen surplus property, achieving environmental reuse benefits and added revenue.
- Numerous employee trainings to enhance organizational efficiency and safety in all aspects of Midpen's work.
- Implementation of a General Manager's Bi-weekly Notes practice to communicate important progress notes to the Board of Directors.
- Coordination and hosting of two employee events, a staff appreciation summer picnic at Foothills Park and a staff recognition event in November.

MAJOR MILESTONE ACCOMPLISHED:

- Skyline Field Office upgrades, including insulation in the shop, shop organization, electrical improvements in the stable building, and office floor replacement, and also completion of design specifications for a new awning, equipment shelter, and heating and ventilations system.

- Organization-wide Compensation Study through an inclusive process with representatives from the Field Employees Association and input from unrepresented and represented employees.
- Notifications to employees about the Affordable Care Act and continued monitoring of compliance requirements of this new law.

IN PROGRESS:

- Midpen “Green Team” to research, evaluate and implement potential changes to conserve resources such as paper, energy, water, pollution, and more.
- Updates and improvements to Board of Director policies in the Board Policy manual.
- New performance evaluation form and performance review guidelines for Midpen managers and supervisors to ensure organizational alignment for effective delivery of the mission.

AWARDS/GRANTS/RECOGNITION

- Honored by the Santa Clara County League of Conservation Voters for 40 years of Environmental Service.
- Received \$196,000 in grant reimbursement funds from the State Water Resources Control Board for the completed Hicks Flat Mercury Remediation Project.
- Awarded \$231,000 in grant funding through the State Fisheries Restoration Grant Program for road improvements and sediment reduction projects at Driscoll Ranch in the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Received \$1,241,196 in grant reimbursements from the Office of Economic Adjustment for the demolition and site restoration work at Mount Umunhum.
- Received \$324,648 in funding from Peninsula Open Space Trust to construct the Mindego Gateway parking area.
- Submitted grant reimbursement requests totaling \$102,230 to the Habitat Conservation Fund and Land and Water Conservation Fund Programs to reimburse implementation costs associated with the El Corte de Madera Creek Staging Area and Trails project.