



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Fiscal Year 2014-15 Accomplishments



FISCAL YEAR 2014-15 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:

- New extension of the Mindego Hill trail to the top of the prominent Mindego Hill at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (OSP).
- Opening of the Mindego Gateway parking area at Russian Ridge OSP.
- New Ancient Oaks trail extension, which included construction of two bridges and three puncheons at Russian Ridge OSP.
- New Bald Mountain parking area with 24 vehicles spaces, 4 adjacent roadside spaces, restroom, and signboards.
- New electronic gate at Mount Umunhum Road north of the Bald Mountain parking area, as well as replacement of guard rail and installation of speed limit signs.
- Peter's Creek bridge replacement at Long Ridge OSP, including reuse of the deconstructed wood.
- Culvert system replacement at Bear Creek OSP with a rocked drainage structure.
- Reroute of a section of the Coyote Ridge trail to avoid an area prone to erosion at Fremont Older OSP.
- Relocation of an unused 5,000 gallon water tank to the Bear Creek stables site to provide additional water storage capacity.
- Board approval of the initial 5-year Measure AA Projects List.
- Dedication of the Bo Gimbal trail in honor of this long time District volunteer who built many trails in the area.
- Recognition of over 500 District volunteers and over 20,000 hours of service at the 2014 Volunteer Recognition Event.
- Multiple volunteer projects and new volunteer recruits, including:
 - 82 outdoor service projects with volunteers
 - 5 Eagle Scout projects
 - 3 park management internships projects
 - 2 Girl Scout Gold Award projects
 - Over 20 new recruits to assist with community outreach events
 - 45 new recruits for volunteer trail patrol for a total of 165 active volunteer trail patrols
 - 30 new volunteers as part of the Advanced Resource Management Squad (ARMS), and doubling of the annual hours of service with a total of 1,370 hours

- More than 3,300 participants in 233 docent-led interpretive activities, including hikes, mountain bike rides, and canine companion walks with topics such as watersheds, fungi, Anza expedition, bats, oaks, Ohlone medicine, early morning birding, and many more.
- 30 docent-led request hikes for a variety of groups, including scouts, alumni, church, environmental non-profits, home school, and colleges with a total of 450 participants.
- Welcomed 2,245 adults and 1,211 children to the Daniels Nature Center, which was open 67 days during the year.
- Spaces & Species field trips to 785 students (3rd-5th grades) at Skyline Ridge Preserve led by Outdoor Education Leader docents. Out of the 32 classes that participated in the program, 9 classes received funding for transportation assistance.
- Nature discovery education at Los Trancos, Monte Bello, and Windy Hill Preserves in partnership with Environmental Volunteers, in which an additional 2,200 elementary school students participated.
- Launched the Walk-with-a-Doc program and hosted two walks with the San Mateo County Medical Association, which were led by bilingual physician volunteers, expanding Midpen's outreach to new preserve visitors.
- Engaged in Bay Area Healthy Parks Healthy People Initiative with "first Saturday of the month" programs.
- Graduated 20 people in the bi-annual, 12-week training course for Outdoor Activity Docents to serve as ambassadors to engage the public in a deeper understanding of the area's natural environments and land conservation.
- Provided Docents with enrichment trainings on topics that included river otter ecology, wildlife tracking, climate change, and redwood conservation.
- Entered into a partnership agreement with Latino Outdoors, a non-profit organization dedicated to building the capacity of environmental groups to work with diverse audiences, to lead Spanish-language hikes and provide trainings to staff and volunteers.
- Led 2 Spanish-language hikes and two classroom activities for English language learners, all native speakers of Spanish.
- Hosted the Wingding Family Fest – 4th annual event at Skyline Ridge Preserve in collaboration with Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, welcoming approximately 200 participants.
- Organized the second African American History Month Celebration at Ravenswood OSP, with over 120 guests, including 50 children.
- Participated in 23 community events such as community-wide festivals, employer health and benefits fairs, nature education events, and conferences organized by cities and towns, non-profit organizations, and businesses.
- Sponsored and led field trip to Woods Trail for the Biennial California Native Plant Society Conference.
- Offered educational presentations on a variety of topics, including:

- Presented the District's grazing program to the UC Cooperative Extension Range Camp.
- Presented to the National Society for Range Management on the California Certified Rangeland Manager Program and on management practices for California Rangelands.
- Discussed environmental careers at the Saratoga High School Career Day.
- Provided an overview of the Integrated Pest Management Program to California State Parks and the Santa Clara County Weed Management Area.
- Ranger enforcement of ordinances through written warnings and citations, and emergency response, including:
 - Over 1000 citations
 - 481 written warnings
 - 26 bicycle accidents
 - 25 medical incidents
 - 10 motor vehicle accidents
 - 1 fatality
- Promotion of the District's website, resulting in 961,947 Page Views with 64% of visits from new visitors to the website, 26% using a mobile device to access the site (52% increase from prior year), and 11% using a tablet to access the site (19% increase from prior year)
- Increased Facebook followers from 2,275 to 5,250 (131% increase) with 340 Facebook Posts for 752,944 total impressions.
- Increased Twitter followers from 1,202 to 1,593 (32% increase) with 754 Tweets for 191,066 total impressions.
- Maintained a strong presence in media outlets, including:
 - Earned 134 media (print and broadcast) stories, including 9 targeted stories to diverse audiences, 14 to families and youth, and 23 providing information about Measure AA
 - 21 rebroadcasts of District videos
 - 28 mentions on Radio and/or TV

MAJOR MILESTONES ACCOMPLISHED:

- Completed the evaluation, design, and permitting for two footbridges across Stevens Creek in Monte Bello OSP.
- Finalized the Harkins Bridge design and applied for required permits (Purissima Creek OSP).
- Extended the Umunhum trail to the summit by an additional two miles.
- Held two successful public workshops to kickoff the Bear Creek Stable Site Plan project.
- Received permits and constructed the first phase of the Oljon Trail in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve.
- Awarded the Radar Tower Interim Repair Project contract to begin the repair work in April.
- Confirmed the design goals and conceptual design for the Mt. Um Guadalupe Creek Overlook and Bridges with the Planning and Natural Resources Committee.
- Selected a partner for the Hawthorn Historic Complex to complete site rehabilitation and restoration work.

- Cleared downed trees and blocked culverts resulting from strong storms in December, 2014.
- Completed preliminary feasibility studies for a trail alignment and parking lot associated with the Purisima-to-the-Sea Regional Trail Project.
- Coordinated with the City of East Palo Alto on the design and construction of the new Nature Education Center at Cooley Landing Park.
- Continued work to secure a new San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Bay Trail Easement to close a critical gap along the Bay Trail alignment north of East Palo Alto.
- Major progress in updating the District's website platform for ease-of-use, mobile accessibility and system stability.

PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

COMPLETED:

- Development of the Integrated Pest Management Program with the creation of a Guidance Manual describing the program and Environmental Impact Report, which were adopted by the Board on December 10, 2014.
- Partnership with San Mateo County Parks on a bioblitz at Memorial Park in collaboration with Cal Academy and other organizations.
- Reconstruction of Pond DR05 at Driscoll Ranch, including the removal of nonnative fish to enhance breeding habitat for California red-legged frog.
- Extension of a US Fish and Wildlife Recovery permit under the U.S. Endangered Species Act to include all of the La Honda Creek OSP and the Mindego Ranch portion of Russian Ridge OSP. This permit provides Endangered Species Act compliance for habitat improvement projects in occupied San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog habitat.
- Entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for the recovery of San Francisco garter snake. This permit will allow the construction, operation, and maintenance of the facilities at the Mindego Ranch area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.
- Surveys for California red-legged frog at the La Honda Creek OSP. Despite a low water year, young of the year frogs were observed in one of the recently repaired stock ponds, indicating breeding success of the frogs at the site.
- Completion of new "duck barn" and duck pond at Deer Hollow Farm.
- Due to the ongoing drought, reduced the number of livestock on all 10,800 acres of land that are part of the active conservation grazing program.
- Improvements and major repairs in support of conservation grazing:
 - New grazing infrastructure around the Red Barn area of La Honda Creek OSP and began grazing the pasture immediately adjacent to the Red Barn.
 - Riparian protection fencing along a La Honda Creek tributary and along the eastern perimeter of another pasture to resume conservation grazing on three pastures.
 - Road and fence improvements, and nearly 26,000 feet of pipe and 23 new water troughs.

- New rangeland management plans and selection of a conservation grazing tenant to manage the Apple Orchard and Event Center parcels of La Honda Creek OSP.
- New corral at Mindego Ranch.
- Water system repairs and upgrade at Mindego Ranch, including two 5,000 gallon water storage tanks, approximately 11,000 linear feet of buried pipe, six concrete water troughs, and a solar-powered water pump to provide water to the storage tanks.
- Removal of an abandoned water tank from the hilltop of Pulgas Ridge OSP.
- Demolition of more than 25 abandoned and dilapidated structures on six properties and site restoration to a more natural condition (Sierra Azul, Monte Bello, and La Honda OSPs).
- The publishing of an article about red-bellied newts within Monte Bello OSP by the University of California, Berkeley scientists using information collected by District staff and volunteers.
- Removal of an old dump site along Guadalupe Creek and fence installation to prevent future dumping and protect riparian habitat at Sierra Azul OSP.
- Final phase of a 20 year resource management project to remove non-native eucalyptus trees at Pulgas Ridge OSP.

MAJOR MILESTONES ACCOMPLISHED:

- Managed year-long air quality monitoring study at Rancho San Antonio OSP to assess impacts of Lehigh Quarry activities. Provided final report to Board and interested parties and presented the results of the study to Rancho San Antonio neighbors and Cupertino residents.
- Issued a Request for Proposals and selected consultants to assist with the cleanup of the Mindego ranch corral.
- Worked with the National Marine Fisheries Service to conduct a survey of Permanente Creek within Rancho San Antonio to assess habitat for steelhead trout. This survey will support Santa Clara Valley Water District's desire to evaluate the concrete diversion channel between Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek for modifications that would improve fish passage up into Rancho San Antonio, as well as Lehigh Southwest Cement's commitment to restore approximately 3.5 miles of the creek.
- Annual watering and weeding of native plants around the new staging area and commemorative decks at the Mindego Gateway Staging area.
- Removal of yellow star thistle from the Native American bulb garden at the Mindego Gateway and surrounding area by volunteers.
- Purple star thistle invasive plant control around Mindego Lake and Big Spring.
- Prepared scope/bid documents for demolition and site restoration of the former Lobner property, which includes removing five cabins & site restoration.
- Contracted with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to treat slender false brome (SFB) on neighboring properties to Thornewood OSP as well as other surrounding private parcels. Field staff, contractors, and volunteers continued to treat SFB in District preserves.

- Partnered with U.S. Geological Survey to complete the first year of a multiyear study to determine population size of San Francisco Garter Snake in Mindego Ranch at Russian Ridge OSP.
- Continued Sudden Oak Death research partnership and preventive treatment for the 10th year, with matching funding from the US Forest Service.
- Received permits for La Honda Creek Watershed Protection Plan project, funded in part through a grant from the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program administered by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Continued research partnerships through the Resource Management Grants Program with regional universities and organizations to conduct research on natural and cultural resources on District preserves.
- Drafted the Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Hendrys Creek Restoration Project and continued work on developing a Long-Term Management Plan (LTMP) and Conservation Easement (CE) for the property in partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Water District.
- Annual surveys of deer populations on District preserves.
- Monitoring of grassland communities at Russian Ridge OSP.
- Continued to identify, map, manage, and protect District water rights.
- Began environmental analysis for the removal of more than 12 abandoned cars at Long Ridge OSP.
- Continued assistance to state and county agencies in efforts to eradicate marijuana grows to enhance public safety and protect water quality in the preserves.
- Worked with Peninsula Open Space Trust to administer resource protection projects at the Apple Orchard and Event Center properties, which included riparian fencing, grading and rock access roads, and spring development.
- Assessed a riparian easement along San Gregorio Creek.

ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

COMPLETED

- Purchase, exchange, or partnership with other conservation agencies to protect 521 acres of open space lands with \$740,000 in partnership funds and a \$362,500 gift of land, including:
 - Purchased the 60 acre Lysons property securing the land needed for the Stevens Creek regional trail.
 - Purchased a conservation easement over the 353 acre Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) property as a potential future addition to San Mateo County's Pescadero Creek Park Complex.
 - Purchased the 40.2 acre Riggs property, helping protect the Lobitos Creek Watershed, which provides spawning habitat for Coho Salmon and Steelhead.
 - Purchased the 40 acre Burton/Robinson property. Entered into a license with Robinson to clean up vehicles, equipment, horses, personal property and debris.

- Redwood Park Gifts – Two gifts of Redwood Park parcels totaling 0.17 acre addition to Purisima Creek Redwoods OSP.
- For the 117 acre Hendrys Creek Property, the 4th Draft of Conservation Easement and Long Term Management Plan with SCVWD was sent to permitting agencies for review. Prepared an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for release in April.
- Property exchange with Ridge Vineyards to protect scenic Monte Bello ridgeline, preserve public recreation and a wildlife corridor, provide for compatible vineyard planting and resolve historic encroachment, resulting in net increase of 25.28 acres of protected land.
- Negotiation with Lehigh Quarry to convey the following property rights to the District:
 - A new trail easement covering 3.2 acres and a widening of the existing Quarry trail easement from 20 to 200 feet.
 - Receipt of two rights of first offer and first refusal on a 210 acre and 55 acre parcel buffering Rancho San Antonio OSP.
- Recorded an easement and quitclaim deeds to protect District water rights as part of Settlement Agreements.
- Resolution of a private party vehicle storage encroachment at El Corte de Madera OSP.

MAJOR MILESTONES ACCOMPLISHED:

- Continued progress on obtaining potential access easements along Mt. Umunhum Road, including:
 - Discussions with affected property owners
 - Surveys to identify extend of roadway improvements
 - Options to address site security
- Prepared maps and legal descriptions for lot line adjustment application to San Mateo County to provide for transfer of the 250 acre Purisima Uplands (Giusti) property, which will complete the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail corridor from Bald Knob to Verde Road.
- Resource surveys for the proposed purchase of the Hendry's Creek property.
- Development of a Preliminary Use and Management Plan for the Driscoll Event Center and Apple Orchard properties, to accompany a Lease and Management Agreement with POST.
- Worked with Santa Clara County Code Enforcement and Planning to evaluate a third party landfill encroachment on District lands and its potential impacts to the Stevens creek drainage.
- Identification of eight (8) proposed Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) in San Mateo County and nine (9) in Santa Clara County for potential inclusion in the Association of Bay Area Governments' PCA nomination process.

GENERAL/MIDPEN-WIDE SUPPORT OF MISSION

- Responses to multiple public inquiries, media interviews, and requests for transmittals of District information regarding the District's \$300 Million General Obligation Bond measure that was part of the June 3, 2014 ballot. The District is happy to report successful passage of the General Obligation Bond by a 67.8% super majority of the voters.

- 2014-15 Update to the Strategic Plan, which serves to guide the development of the annual Action Plan and Budget.
- Preparation of the FY2015-16 Action Plan and Budget, which includes 157 Key Projects.
- Initiation of the Financial and Operational Sustainability Model Study to evaluate existing District workflow processes, staff capacity, and organizational structure, and identify options to accelerate completion of high priority projects while continuing to carry out the daily on-going business in a financially prudent and sustainable manner.
- Numerous employee trainings to enhance organizational efficiency, employee safety, and leadership skills, including:
 - Water truck training focused on drafting, driving, and water delivery skills
 - Aerial lift truck use
 - Wildland fire refresher
 - Harassment Prevention
 - Fair and Impartial Policing
 - Participation of three employees in the Santa Clara County Leadership Academy
- Development of cost estimates and preparation of project scopes and timelines for implementing the projects funded through the successful passage of Measure AA.
- Presentations to 17 city and town council meetings, non-profit organizations, industry associations, and schools, including 6 presentations for youth audiences.
- Successful recruitments and hirings for several new positions and numerous vacancies.
- Creation of a Memorial Inventory that includes a full inventory of all preserves.
- Board approval of the Volunteer Memorial Program Plan.
- Repairs and improvements to staff facilities, including:
 - Replacement of the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning system (HVAC) and development of conceptual designs for a heavy equipment shelter and shop awning at the Skyline Field Office
 - Roof replacement and HVAC repairs and recalibration at the Administrative Office
 - Installation of outdoor motion-sensor lights at the Administrative Office to increase building security and employee safety
- Database and systems improvements, including:
 - Renovations to the Training database
 - Upgrades to the Citations/Incidents database and the Permits database to better respond to information requests
- Refunded the 2004 Bonds, resulting in a savings of \$7.3 million.
- New cloud payroll system upgrade to provide real-time processing, improved reports, and improved user interface.
- New guidelines and systems to assist with Measure AA project tracking, including:
 - Project Management and Construction labor tracking spreadsheets
 - Revised Capitalization thresholds to better align with best practices
 - New project account structure to improve project cost tracking

- New Capital Projects Fund to facilitate implementation of the new capitalization thresholds.
- Further streamlined the Midyear Action Plan and Budget process, reducing administrative workload while still providing thorough information to the Board.
- Developed a new public-friendly format to present the FY2015-16 Budget, which includes the 3-Year Capital Improvement Plan, department budget sections, and District overview.
- Presentation of the FY2013-14 Year-End Review and Annual Audit.
- Comprehensive review and updates of 10 separate Administrative Policies.
- Board adoption of an Employee Compensation Guiding Principles Policy.
- Preparation of the District's Vision Plan document and Conservation Atlas.
- Major improvements to the District's Geographic Information Systems, including:
 - Revisions to the Special Status Species mapping information
 - New custom watershed layer with accurate boundaries
- Wayfinding data updates, including:
 - Google Maps driving directions on District's website
 - Updates to 19 signboard maps
 - Patrol Map Book Update
 - Digital Wall Map Update
- Board approval of a new Construction & Demolition Waste Stream Diversion Policy to set recycling and waste diversion guidelines for future District projects.
- Coordination and hosting of two employee events, a staff appreciation event at Mt. Umunhum and a staff recognition event.

AWARDS/GRANTS/RECOGNITION

- California Fisheries Restoration Grant for road improvements and sediment reduction projects in the Driscoll Ranch Area of La Honda Creek OSP.
- Received the Exceptional Public Outreach & Advocacy Award for a large district by the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) for the Vision Plan Project.
- Named a finalist in PR News' Nonprofit PR Awards in the category of Public Affairs / Issues Management for the Vision Plan Project.
- In partnership with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, received a grant to restore in-stream habitat for steelhead and Coho salmon within San Gregorio Creek at La Honda Creek OSP.
- Submitted grant reimbursement requests for work related to the El Corte de Madera Creek staging area and Phase I trail construction.
- Selection of the District's Vision Plan Top 25 Story Board (Map Tour) to showcase at the ESRI Redlands company's gallery.