



# FY25 Major Accomplishments Report

JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025



Headquarters in Los Altos, California





**MISSION** 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.

**COASTSIDE MISSION** To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

#### PHOTO CREDITS

Cover, top: Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Jasmine Leong)

Cover, lower left: Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Clair Sapilewski)

Cover, lower middle: Midpen Community Outreach Event, Santa Clara County Earth Day (Ben King)

Cover, lower right: Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve (Jeff Butterworth)

This page: Coal Creek Open Space Preserve (Frances Freyberg)



# FY25 Major Accomplishments Report

JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025

As we conclude fiscal year 2025 (FY25), this report highlights significant achievements within the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) priority program areas. Accomplishments related to specific areas of interest span all four priority program areas. An accompanying icon key is provided below to indicate both priority program areas and areas of interest throughout this report.

## PRIORITY PROGRAM AREAS

### Land Acquisition and Preservation

Midpen seeks to purchase or otherwise acquire interest in the maximum feasible area of strategic open space land within the district, including baylands, foothills and ridgelines, and link its open space lands with federal, state, county and city parklands and watersheds.

### Public Access, Education and Outreach

Midpen provides public access to the open space lands for low-intensity recreational uses to everyone, regardless of physical abilities or economic status.

### Natural Resource Protection and Restoration

Midpen protects and restores the natural diversity and integrity of its resources for their value to the environment and the public.

### Assets and Organizational Support

Midpen employs a highly capable, professional workforce and provides them with the facilities and resources needed to run an efficient and responsible organization on behalf of the public.

## ICON KEY



Land  
Acquisition  
and  
Preservation



Natural  
Resource  
Protection and  
Restoration



Public Access,  
Education  
and Outreach



Assets and  
Organizational  
Support



Agriculture



Diversity,  
Equity and  
Inclusion



Wildlife Fire  
Resiliency



Measure AA

Midpen is proud of the work we've accomplished to serve our communities and region, in close collaboration with partner agencies. All projects and programs reflect the priorities set annually by the board of directors.

View Major Accomplishments Reports from prior fiscal years at [openspace.org/reports](https://openspace.org/reports).





## Land Acquisition and Preservation



\* After final surveys, an additional 1.25 acres from South Cowell was added in FY25 after the FY26 Budget-in-Brief was printed.



### EL SERENO OPEN SPACE PRESERVE—DUAL ACQUISITIONS SUPPORT REGIONAL TRAILS AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

In late 2024, Midpen acquired two properties—totaling 36.6 acres—to expand and enhance El Sereno Open Space Preserve. The larger, 35.2-acre property acquisition will fill a critical gap between the expansive trail networks located on each side of Highway 17 via a future trail overcrossing planned for construction in FY28. The future trail link through the newly acquired property will connect the regional Bay Area Ridge Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza National Trail. This property acquisition also protects wildlife dispersal areas near the proposed location of the Highway 17 wildlife undercrossing, located approximately a quarter mile south of the property.



Left: View from the 35.2-acre property looking out towards the future wildlife undercrossing location, El Sereno Open Space Preserve (Aaron Peth)  
Right: View from the 1.4-acre property looking south into the Santa Cruz Mountains, El Sereno Open Space Preserve (Jasmine Leong)

The smaller, 1.4-acre acquisition secures the main public entry point into the preserve from the west for hikers, maintenance crews and emergency services. This smaller purchase supports the future expansion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail further westward to connect with Sanborn-Skyline County Park and safeguards wildlife habitats in the Guadalupe and San Tomas Aquino Watersheds.



## RUSSIAN RIDGE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE EXPANDS

In May 2025, Midpen significantly expanded Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve by purchasing a 273.5-acre open space property, permanently safeguarding a beautiful mosaic of woodlands, shrublands, open grasslands and 44 acres of redwood forest. It also protects two seasonal streams that are vital to the Upper San Gregorio Creek Watershed. Nestled between the Russian Ridge and Skyline Ridge Preserves, this land is a haven for wildlife. It provides essential habitat for the American badger, a species of special concern in California. Crucially, it offers potential habitat for the California red-legged frog, which is federally listed as a threatened species, and the San Francisco garter snake, a federally listed endangered species. This expansion ensures that these valuable natural areas and their inhabitants will thrive for generations to come.



View from the 273.5-acre property looking northwestward, Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Jasmine Leong)



## KEY LAND SECURED FOR FUTURE REGIONAL TRAIL AND WILDLIFE IN SIERRA AZUL OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

Midpen purchased a 40-acre property in March 2025, essential for the development of the future Mount Umunhum-to-the-Sea Trail that will one day connect people from the Mount Umunhum summit and its surrounding trails westward toward Loma Prieta and beyond to the Santa Cruz County coastline. In addition to trail access, this property plays a vital role in connecting larger natural areas within the 19,500-acre preserve and surrounding open space lands, creating pathways for wildlife between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo and Gabilan ranges. These linkages are critical for maintaining genetic diversity, facilitating migration and dispersion and supporting large home ranges.



View from the 40-acre property looking westward, Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Jasmine Leong)

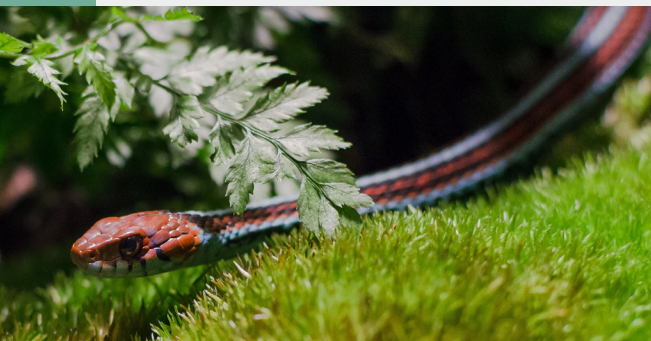




# Natural Resource Protection and Restoration

## SUSTAINING A LOCAL ENDANGERED SPECIES: THE SAN FRANCISCO GARTER SNAKE

With a rust-red head and bright red and turquoise stripes running down its dark black body, it is clear why the San Francisco garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia*) has been called the most beautiful snake in the world. Despite its name, this dazzling snake lives primarily in San Mateo County, though its historic range stretches from San Francisco to northern Santa Cruz County. Sadly, this reptile is critically endangered, with only a few thousand individuals left in the wild.



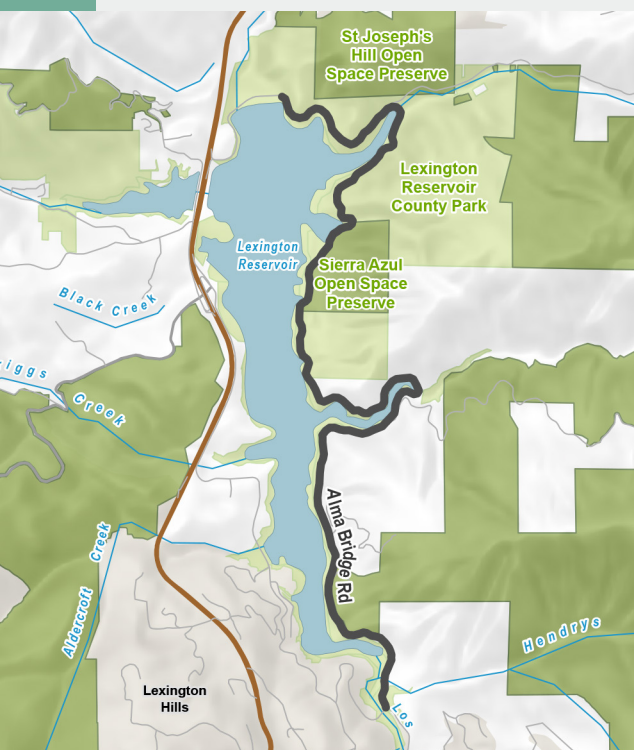
A San Francisco garter snake on Midpen lands (Patrick Apfeld)

Midpen and its partners launched a vital “head-starting” program as part of a conservation effort to support the federally endangered San Francisco garter snake. Working with partner agency biologists at the United States Geological Survey, gravid (pregnant) female snakes were captured from a healthy and abundant population on a Midpen preserve and transported to the San Francisco Zoo to raise their offspring in a safe environment, with the goal of joining them with other populations that are on the brink of extirpation (local extinction) to increase the health and size of these populations. This partnership effort includes genetic work to deepen our understanding of conservation strategies for these vibrant reptiles. Achieving the conservation target of 10 sustainable breeding populations of over 200 individuals each could result in their removal from the endangered species list. There are currently only about half a dozen such populations, some falling short of the 200-snake threshold.

## ENHANCING WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY ON ALMA BRIDGE ROAD

Midpen is collaborating with Santa Clara County and other local agencies on the Alma Bridge Road Wildlife Passage project which aims to enhance wildlife connectivity, specifically for California newts, across Alma Bridge Road near Lexington Reservoir within zones of known high roadkill counts. This past year, Midpen

completed the technical studies and schematic designs for proposed roadway improvement options that will facilitate safe wildlife passage. Midpen also initiated the 65% design development and permitting process and is finalizing a CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) exemption that aims to speed up the environmental review process for projects that are specifically designed to help wildlife and the environment.



Left: Alma Bridge Road Wildlife Passage (the dark green line along Lexington Reservoir represents the project area). Above: Alma Bridge Road (Mark Brandi).



## NEW TRAIL NAME SHEDS LIGHT ON A SOLITARY, NOCTURNAL SPECIES

Midpen renamed a 1.2-mile section of Bay Area Ridge Trail in Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve to “Badger’s Byway”, acknowledging and highlighting the presence of American badgers in the Skyline region. American badgers (*Taxidea taxus*), a listed species of special concern, are true ecosystem engineers. Their digging causes disturbances in the soil, which positively affects soil properties and the resulting landscapes. Badgers remain one of the least understood mammals in North America because of their nocturnal, underground lifestyle and lack of historical data. Midpen is working to change that through this year’s trail renaming initiative, which reflects its commitment to raising public awareness about the vital yet often overlooked lives of wildlife in our open spaces and to building broader support for their protection.



American badgers on Midpen lands, nighttime (left, Ken Hickman) and daytime (right, Clair Sapilewski).

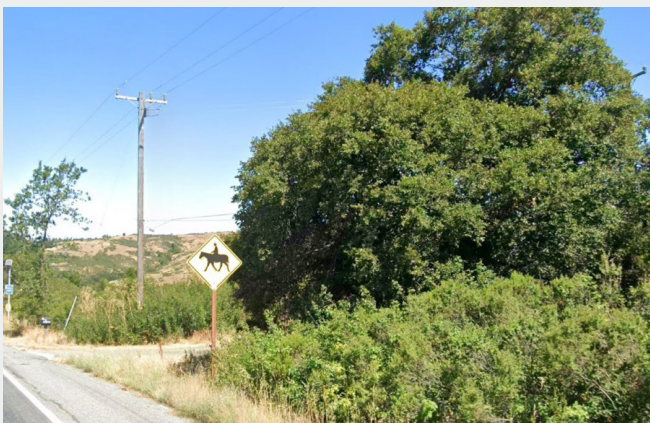


## WILDLAND FIRE RESILIENCE AND FOREST HEALTH

Midpen is dedicated to protecting our natural spaces and surrounding communities from the threat of catastrophic wildfires. While large fires are thankfully rare in Midpen preserves, our staff work year-round on proactive strategies to prevent, prepare for and respond to potential fires. This effort involves several key components, ensuring our landscapes are healthy and resilient.

### Reducing Fire Fuels and Creating Safety Zones

A major part of Midpen’s wildlife preparedness work involves reducing the amount of flammable vegetation (what we call “fuel”) and creating fuel breaks, which are areas where vegetation is thinned or removed to slow a fire’s spread. This is crucial for ensuring safe escape routes. This year, Midpen initiated fuel breaks along Highways 35 and 84, and completed maintenance on existing breaks in multiple preserves, including Coal Creek, Teague Hill and La Honda Creek Open Space Preserves. Midpen also successfully tackled the removal of highly flammable eucalyptus trees along Highway 84 and on Monte Bello Road. Additionally, Midpen joined forces with local fire agencies to expand fuel reduction efforts in Russian Ridge and Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserves along the roadway frontage of Skyline Boulevard, clearing about 25 acres of this community escape route.



Before and after fuel reduction efforts along Highway 35. (Christian Bonner)



## Restoring Healthy Habitats

Midpen's wildland fire resiliency efforts also focus on restoring the health of natural habitats. This is demonstrated through multi-year plans to reduce wildfire fuels and rehabilitate ecosystems at locations such as Bear Creek Redwoods, Long Ridge, El Sereno, Felton Station, and Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserves, as well as the Cathedral Oaks area within Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. These long-term efforts strengthen the resilience



Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve  
(Frances Freyburg)

of these landscapes against increasingly intense wildfires. A great example from this year is the restoration of over seven acres of a former Christmas tree farm comprised of dense, overgrown cultivar Douglas-fir trees (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in Bear Creek Redwoods. These trees supported minimal native understory, provided low-quality wildlife habitat and exhibited low resiliency to wildland fire. Midpen conducted this work in a phased approach to avoid detrimental impacts to wildlife, minimize pathogen spread and allow for the reuse of mulched biomass as erosion control cover. Additionally, Midpen maintained 5.3 acres of montane chaparral habitat in Sierra Azul by reducing knobcone pine, a tree species known to encroach into habitat that supports the Santa Cruz kangaroo rat, a critically imperiled "keystone" species. Removing woody plants from the target area maintains habitat suitability for the kangaroo rat while simultaneously reducing fire risk.

## Prescribed Fire Plans in Action

For the first time in 14 years, Midpen collaborated with Cal Fire and Santa Clara County to conduct a nine-acre prescribed burn operation in a closed area of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve in fall 2024. A prescribed burn is a science-based tool in which low-intensity, controlled fire is intentionally set, allowed to burn then fully extinguished. These burns mimic natural fire cycles, helping to clear out excess vegetation, promote healthier and open grasslands, improve habitat for wildlife and reduce the risk of large, uncontrolled wildfires. Midpen staff also developed two additional plans this year for future prescribed fires at other preserve locations.



Prescribed burn at El Sereno Open Space Preserve. Top left: before the prescribed burn (Midpen Staff). Top right: during the prescribed burn (Michael Gorman). Bottom left: Midpen staff on the day of the prescribed burn (Michael Gorman). Bottom right: After the prescribed burn (Midpen Staff).





## CONSERVATION GRAZING AND IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Conservation grazing is a tool Midpen uses to care for working lands by enhancing biodiversity, reducing wildland fire risk and supporting local agriculture on the San Mateo County Coast. This year, Midpen improved rangelands that are part of its conservation grazing program across La Honda Creek, Purisima Creek Redwoods, Tunitas Creek and Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserves. Improvements included brush management across more than 650 acres, upgrades to water systems and the installation of wildlife-friendly fencing. These efforts improve grazing distribution, helping remove excessive non-native thatch and encouraging the growth of diverse native wildflowers and grasses. They also support responsible cattle management and exclusion practices to safeguard nearby creeks and riparian habitats.



Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve (Matthew Shapero).



Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve (Matthew Shapero).



Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Matthew Shapero).





# Public Access, Interpretation, Education & Outreach



## EXPANDING PUBLIC ACCESS AT BEAR CREEK REDWOODS OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

In fall 2024, as part of a Measure AA-funded project to expand public access and restore redwood habitat at Bear Creek Redwoods, Midpen opened an entirely new area of the preserve to the public. With the addition of the recently completed Thimbleberry Trail, a total of four miles of trail have been recently opened in the northeastern area of the preserve to equestrians and hikers. Work at the nearby historic Alma College area continues, with the planting of native species and groundcover plugs as a part of a multi-year effort to successfully revegetate the site following the rehabilitation of numerous historic structures on the premises. Midpen's new trails and outstanding contributions to expand and enhance public trail use in California were recently recognized with the prestigious Merit Award for Development through the California Trails and Greenways awards program.

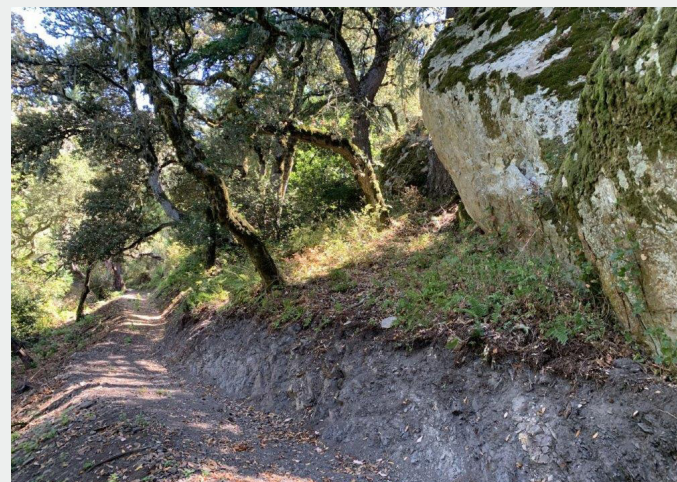
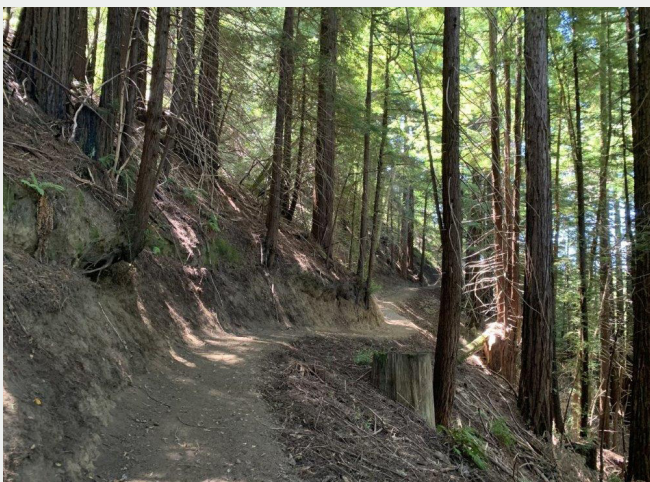


Views of the recently completed Thimbleberry trail in lower Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Bryan Apple).



## UPPER LA HONDA CREEK TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Midpen's trail crew continued building trails in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. In FY25, the trail crew constructed 1.6 miles of new trail, including a trail segment that connects the Coho Vista Trail in upper La Honda Creek to an existing, improved ranch road and a new trail further south, in the central area of the preserve. The highly anticipated public opening of the new trails and the long-awaited connection between upper and lower La Honda Creek Preserve is scheduled to occur in fall 2025.



Views of the new trail work and rock outcroppings in the central area of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve (Bryan Apple).





## MAJOR PROGRESS ON THE HIGHWAY 17 WILDLIFE AND TRAIL CROSSINGS

The Highway 17 Wildlife and Trail Crossings project aims to build a wildlife undercrossing and a separate multi-use trail overcrossing near Lexington Reservoir. These crossings will reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, connect more than 50 miles of regional trails, and link over 30,000 acres of protected public lands and habitat—providing safe passage for mountain lions, deer, and other wildlife across Highway 17.

This year, Midpen completed the environmental review work and preliminary designs necessary for the project. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is taking the lead on the next crucial step of completing the Caltrans plans, specifications and estimates phase. VTA will be meticulously working on the detailed design of the two crossings, preparing all the necessary documentation to move us closer to construction.

During FY25, the project's environmental documentation and public disclosure efforts were graciously recognized with prestigious awards, including a Project Merit Award from the Environmental Business Journal in 2024 and an Outstanding Environmental Analysis Document Award from the Association of Environmental Professionals in 2025. These accolades highlight the project's commitment to balancing environmental protection with the need for wildlife connectivity and regional trail connections.

Midpen staff receiving an Outstanding Environmental Analysis Document Award from the Association of Environmental Professionals in 2025



## PLANNING FOR PUBLIC ACCESS IN THE HAWTHORNS AREA OF WINDY HILL OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

Midpen is preparing the Hawthorns Area Plan, a comprehensive use and management plan, for the Hawthorns Area in Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. In FY25, Midpen's Board of Directors reviewed the proposed public access recommendations, which were prepared by a public access working group comprised of residents, and approved incorporating the conceptual parking and trail options into the Hawthorns Area Plan. These approvals will inform the next phases of work: project schematic design, preparation of a comprehensive use and management plan and environmental review.



## EXPANDING PRESERVE ACCESSIBILITY

Over the past year, Midpen made a substantial investment in preserve-wide ADA improvements, significantly enhancing accessibility for everyone. This includes adding new ADA parking spaces and upgrading trails to ADA standards at Skyline Ridge, Russian Ridge and Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserves. Improvements include surface hardening, reducing steepness and adding new access ramps. These improvements are part of Midpen's larger, ongoing ADA Barrier Removal Project, which was created to systematically remove accessibility barriers at Midpen facilities and preserves.

A newly constructed ADA parking space at Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve (Sean Yao).





## IMPROVING PRESERVE NAVIGATION

El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve, with its 34 miles of winding trails through redwood forests, is now easier to explore due to a new trail-junction numbering system. Midpen staff developed this user-friendly system to help visitors quickly pinpoint their location within the nearly 3,000-acre preserve. Every trail intersection now has a unique number that matches both printed and digital maps. The new numbered signs were installed in August 2024, and all maps—including those on Midpen’s website and popular offline navigation apps like **Avenza** and **OuterSpatial**—have been updated. Building on this success, Midpen plans to implement similar numbering systems at Rancho San Antonio, Bear Creek Redwoods and La Honda Creek Open Space Preserves.

Example of trail junction numbering in El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve



## ENHANCING OUR PRESERVE USE PERMIT SYSTEM

Did you know that some activities on Midpen open space preserves require a use permit? Permits are issued for activities that include groups of 20 or more, like ceremonies, camping, after-hours astronomy viewing, photography shoots and parking at some preserve locations. Most permits are free of charge and applications are available online. This year, a new preserve use permit system was deployed on Midpen’s website, improving security, reliability and access to permits. These efforts will help ensure smooth coordination with the public and other organizations regarding the use of Midpen preserves.



ADA improvements to the Skyline Trail, Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve (Sean Yao).



## INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Docents are dedicated, long-term volunteers who are passionate about educating and inspiring Midpen preserve visitors. You'll find docent naturalists leading interpretive hikes and bike rides throughout the preserves. At Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, outdoor education docents guide field trips for elementary school students, and on weekends, the nature center docents warmly greet visitors at the David C. Daniels Nature Center. The following statistics show just how much docents have contributed to Midpen's mission in FY25.



Docent naturalist hours



Docent naturalist guided activities



Docent-guided activity participants



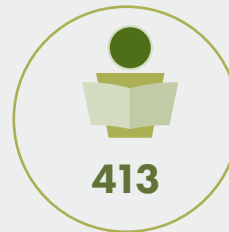
David C. Daniels Nature Center visitors



Outdoor education docent hours



Spaces & Species Field Trips hosted by outdoor education docents



Elementary school students served



Top Left: Nature History Docent-Led Group Hike, Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Catherine Xun). Above: Spaces and Species Field Trip, Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve (Jeff Butterworth). Left: David C. Daniels Nature Center Visitors, Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve (Shannon Mess).



## TRAILS AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

Volunteers in our Trails and Stewardship Program actively contribute to a more resilient environment and an engaged community. They deliver hands-on landscape restoration, assist visitors along the trails, contribute to community science and increase community awareness through both short- and long-term programs.

Volunteer efforts in FY25 included:



Advanced Resource  
Management Stewards  
volunteer hours



Volunteer trail patrol  
hours



Volunteer trail patrol  
reports



Land and Community  
Group Steward  
volunteer hours



Land and Community  
Group Steward projects



Top Left: Land Steward Volunteers working on yellow starthistle removal, Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve (Ellen Gartside). Above: Community Group Stewards: West Valley College working on French broom removal, Coal Creek Open Space Preserve (Catherine Caldwell). Left: Community Group Stewards: Sierra Alpine Hikers working on trail brushing, Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve (Catherine Caldwell)





## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Through the Community Partnership Program, Midpen touches a diverse range of people, providing the extra boost they may need to engage their own communities outdoors in a holistic, supported way. The program works to address specific barriers such as transportation, language support, safety concerns, knowledge about outdoor recreation and other resources needed that provide comfort and ease to individuals unfamiliar with outdoor recreation and enjoyment. Supported community partners foster dialogue and create opportunities to bridge gaps in understanding and ensure that a wider range of community members can enjoy and learn safely in open space lands. In FY25, Midpen programmatically and financially supported nine community partners through the program.

### Latino Outdoors

8 community hikes, 1 virtual program  
Latino families, youth, seniors and particularly new preserve users



### Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

6 community bike rides  
Diverse communities consisting of new and experienced riders



### Bay Area Older Adults

6 community hikes  
Seniors with financial, physical and educational barriers



### Saved by Nature

6 community hikes  
All Bay Area residents but especially communities who have been historically underfunded



### Branching Out

6 hikes  
LGBTQIA+



### Boys and Girls Club of the Coastside

2 hikes  
Coastside youth and young adult



### Student Conservation Association

2-week long field project  
Youth and young adult conservation career seekers



### Vista Center

2 hikes  
Blind and visually impaired people



### East Palo Alto Library

1 pilot hike  
Families, youth, seniors from the East Palo Alto area





## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Informational tabling events provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction between Midpen representatives and the public, raising awareness of Midpen and allowing for meaningful conversations and direct feedback. Through a compelling and informative display, these events aim to spark interest in Midpen's work and encourage deeper community engagement in open space conservation. In FY25, a total of 50 outreach events were held across the region and included the following:

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Sunnyvale Art and Wine Festival

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Pasifika STEM Fair

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State Parks Coastal Wildflower Day

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Sempervirens Fund Redwoods Festival

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Sustainable Pescadero Spring Picnic

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POST's Wild and Scenic Film Festival

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Coastal Career Fair

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Community Firewise Day

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Mountain View Pride

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Midpen Community Outreach Events. Left: Santa Clara County Earth Day (Ben King), Portola Redwoods State Park (Eric Schmidt).





## Assets and Organizational Support



### SUPPORTING AN INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY CULTURE AND BROAD ENGAGEMENT

This year marked a pivotal step forward with the completion of a comprehensive organizational assessment that captures staff perspectives, values and systemic opportunities for growth to enhance internal and external opportunities for inclusivity and engagement in Midpen’s work. Guided by these insights, Midpen staff collaborated across departments to develop a multi-year action plan grounded in Midpen’s strategic goals and objectives, shared common values and accountability. The plan sets out clear goals to foster a culture of care, respect, and belonging—both within the organization and in our external relationships. Internally, it emphasizes inclusive leadership, strong communication, and meaningful staff development and engagement. Externally, it focuses on strengthening community partnerships, enhancing public engagement, and deepening connections with tribes and neighboring communities.



DEI-focused staff engagement events, Administrative Office (Midpen Staff).

### AWARD-WINNING AI: MIDPEN BALANCES WILDLIFE STUDY AND PUBLIC PRIVACY

The Center for Digital Government (CDG) presented Midpen with a Government Experience Award for its innovative Wildlife Camera and Constituent Privacy AI project. This project, a collaborative effort between Midpen’s Natural Resources and Information Systems and Technology departments, uses a custom-developed AI platform to blur human faces within wildlife photos before they are uploaded for analysis. This approach allows Midpen to continue vital scientific research on wildlife—studying usage, movement patterns and important habitats—while also protecting the privacy of preserve visitors. Midpen was one of only two special districts nationwide to be recognized by CDG, a leading national institute focused on technology policy in state and local government.





## IMPROVING SKYLINE AREA FIELD OPERATIONS

Since 2009, Midpen's Skyline Field Office has been identified for upgrades to meet current and future operational needs. The current field office and site supports over 50 field staff and has become too small to accommodate the personnel growth. This growth in staff directly corresponds with the substantial expansion in land acreage under Midpen's care, requiring increased capacity for patrol, maintenance and land stewardship work in addition to the growing challenges of more frequent wildfires and intense winter storms. After being deferred due to competing priorities and limited capacity, the Skyline Field Office project successfully restarted in 2023. Last year, Midpen conducted a rapid assessment of potential field office locations, considering operations, public interface and environmental factors. The selected future site is along Skyline Boulevard within Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, and technical studies and designs are now in progress.



Skyline Field Office meeting (left) and exterior (right), Skyline Ridge Preserve (Galli Basson).



## LEVERAGING GIS TO VISUALIZE MIDPEN LANDS AND TRAILS FOR THE COMMUNITY

While spreadsheets are valuable for data organization, mapping unlocks deeper understanding. Mapping reveals spatial distribution, concentration areas and empowers data-driven decisions with a geographic lens. This year, Midpen's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team continued to receive awards and accolades for recently released applications, including:

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Special Achievement in GIS (SAG) Award for **Trail Explorer** and **Open Data Midpen**.

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Second place award in the Dashboard Map category for **Trail Explorer** at the Esri User Conference.

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Recognized as Highly Commended for the Excellence & Innovation Award for **Trail Explorer** by the California Geographic Information Association.

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Featured by Esri in a case study on **Trail Explorer**, highlighting the team's innovative approach and dedication to providing inclusive and comprehensive tools that improve trip planning and preparedness for preserve users.

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## FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

In addition to receiving the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Budget Award for the 8th straight year, Midpen also received the Government Finance Officers Association's special Triple Crown Medallion for preparing annual comprehensive financial reports that embody the spirit of transparency. The **Triple Crown Medallion** includes the following awards:

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**Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** (ninth year).

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**Annual Comprehensive Financial Report Award** (seventh year).

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**Popular Annual Financial Report Award** (sixth year).

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## LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Midpen staff in the Legislative Program reviewed over a thousand bills in 2024 and identified specific legislation for action. Four out of five of the Program's Priority 1 bills were signed into law by the Governor, with Midpen actively supporting two of these bills, including SB 867 (Allen) leading to the \$10 billion climate bond (Prop 4), which designates \$180 million for wildlife crossings and approximately \$3 billion in total allocations that Midpen may access. Other successful Priority 1 bills addressed rodenticides, CEQA streamlining for restoration projects and state-level actions in support of wildlife connectivity.



## FUNDING IMPACT: GRANTS PROGRAM

This past year, Midpen's Grants Program has been instrumental in driving critical initiatives, securing funding and fostering partnerships that make a tangible difference. The program resulted in three grant awards totaling **\$605,000** to advance Midpen's mission. Midpen currently has **\$18 million** in pending funding requests, poised to unlock even greater opportunities in the coming years.

We appreciate the incredible support from our FY25 funding partners:

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The Orange County Community Foundation

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The Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation

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Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

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