



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-11-18
Meeting 11-08
April 27, 2011

AGENDA ITEM 8

AGENDA ITEM

Tentative Approval of the Complete Set of Draft Resource Management Policies of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review, discuss, and provide comments on the complete set of Draft Resource Management Policies of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District); and
2. Tentatively approve the revised Draft Resource Management Policies.

SUMMARY

The District's Resource Management Policies (RMPs) were first adopted in October of 1994. A series of public workshops was held from 2005 to 2011 in which each of the revised chapters of the RMPs was presented to the Board for review and tentative adoption. At the meeting of April 27, 2011, the Board of Directors will review the complete set of RMPs, including recent changes, request any additional edits or changes, and consider tentative adoption prior to staff initiating the environmental review process and returning to the Board for subsequent consideration of final adoption.

DISCUSSION

District staff have reviewed each of the individual RMP chapters through a series of Board workshops and compiled them into one comprehensive document. During the meeting of March 9, 2011, the Board of Directors reviewed the remaining policy topics that were not identified as priority policies for revision from the original prioritization workshop in 2004, but still required updating to maintain consistency in the updated RMP document (see Report R-11-17). With the completion of the workshop in March, the entire set of RMPs has been reviewed by the Board of Directors. The proposed changes to the document as requested by Board, staff, and the public to date have been provided as an attachment to this report (see Attachments).

At the meeting of April 27, 2011, the Board of Directors will review the complete set of RMPs, request any additional edits or changes, and consider tentative adoption prior to staff initiating

the environmental review process and returning to the Board for subsequent consideration of final adoption.

FISCAL IMPACT

The District's Planning Department allocated \$24,946 during FY2010-11 and FY2011-12 to compile and edit the District's revised RMPs and prepare the required California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public participation and comment has been an ongoing and essential component of this policy development process. As such, notices and invitations to Board workshops have been widely distributed to the public, homeowner associations, partner agencies, and posted on the District's website. Additionally, throughout policy development, staff consulted with a number of partner agencies, consultants, educational institutions, and resource management experts. Prior to formal adoption, the public and other interested parties will receive notice regarding the proposed adoption of the policies and will be provided an opportunity to review the RMPs in their entirety during the CEQA public scoping period scheduled for mid 2011.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Tentative adoption of the RMPs will allow the District's CEQA consultant, DCE, to prepare the appropriate CEQA document prior to the Board's formal adoption of the RMPs. Once public and agency CEQA review is complete, the Board will be asked to approve both the final RMPs and its associated CEQA document.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Board's review and tentative adoption of the revised RMPs, a full CEQA evaluation of environmental impacts will be completed by the District's CEQA consultant. Staff will circulate the CEQA document with the RMPs for public review and comment at a later date. At the completion of the CEQA review, staff will return to the Board at a public meeting to ask for certification of the CEQA document and formal adoption of the District's RMPs.

Attachment(s)

Revised pages from March 9, 2011 workshop

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Document Organization

The RMPs are organized into chapters by subject and resource category. The chapter format generally consists of a background section and a section containing goals, policies, and implementation measures. The background section provides rationale for the goal and policies that follow. The goal is phrased as a broad, general statement describing the desired state or condition to be achieved. The policies state what steps the District will take in order to attain that goal. Policies are numbered according to chapter with the first letter of each of the first two words of the Chapter title followed by a number (e.g. **VM-1** is **V**egetation **M**anagement Policy **1**).

Each policy includes one or more recommended implementation measures, highlighted by bullets (◆). Implementation measures specify action items the District ~~must~~ will strive to carry out to apply the policies to the landscape where feasible. Implementation measures are referenced internally according to bullets. For instance, VM-1: Measure 2 refers to the second bulleted measure under VM-1. Informational sidebars identify current knowledge and practices regarding resource conservation. Key words are noted in **bold** and definitions for each can be found in the Glossary.

The District will ~~implement~~ apply the RMPs ~~through a planning process emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach to everyday District functions and operations from the planning of new trails and facilities, to the evaluation of prospective land acquisitions, to routine Preserve maintenance~~. It will draw upon varied expertise to balance resource needs and public interests. The annual action plan will describe existing and proposed resource management plans and projects, and progress towards resource management goals.

Carrying out and implementing policy measures will be achieved over time, and is subject to funding availability and competing District needs and overall feasibility. Competition for District funds requires balancing the expense of resource management with the cost of continued land acquisition, project planning, and the cost of access and facilities improvements.

MISSION STATEMENT FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The resource management mission statement defines the purpose toward which the District directs its resource management efforts. The District's resource management program is one of stewardship intended to protect resources ~~and~~ to sustain them in perpetuity. The District calls its lands "preserves" rather than "parks," emphasizing the goal of resource preservation. The following overall mission statement reflects the District's commitment to resource management:

Resource Management Mission Statement

The District will protect and restore the diversity and integrity of its resources and ecological processes for their value to the environment and to people, and will provide for the use of the preserves consistent with resource protection.

Overall Resource Management Strategies

The following general strategies summarize how the District will achieve its resource management mission.

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| Strategy 1 | Favor protection of resources when use significantly interferes with resource protection and preservation. |
| Strategy 2 | Provide an effective interdisciplinary program to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources. This program should include planning, interpretation , research, protection, maintenance, and monitoring practices. |
| Strategy 3 | Prevent or minimize human-caused and accelerated impacts, including erosion, invasion by non-native species, disruption of the natural flow of water, degradation of water quality , trampling of vegetation, and displacement of wildlife. |
| Strategy 4 | Protect and restore known rare, endangered, special status species and sensitive habitats , as well as seri- |

ously degraded or deteriorating areas. Give priority to sensitive habitats and consider the relative scarcity of the specific resources involved.

- Strategy 5 Manage open space as a composite resource, rather than as separate and isolated parts. Maintain ecological processes as well as individual species and features. Consider the regional context and cumulative impacts of resource management decisions. Favor long-term goals over short-term benefits.
- Strategy 6 Support low intensity recreational and agricultural use of District lands consistent with resource protection. Consider present and potential use.
- Strategy 7 Balance efforts to protect and restore resources with efforts to acquire and provide public access to lands.
- Strategy 8 Monitor changing conditions and the effectiveness of resource management practices.
- Strategy 9 Increase public knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the natural and cultural resources of the preserves, and support for their conservation.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The RMPs are to be used to guide the overall planning, budgeting, and decision making processes for individual Preserves and for District-wide programs. Implementation of the policies will be through the Use and Management Plan and Master Plan for each Preserve. The District's Land Acquisition Policies shall reference the RMPs to help guide future land acquisitions. Successful implementation of the Policies will result in informed, consistent, and effective resource management.

stroy particular plant species that some animals require for food or cover.

- b. Wide-ranging animals such as the larger predators can be cut off from territories they need for feeding and breeding.
- c. **Non-native** species become more common, displacing natives and thereby also reducing **biodiversity**.
- d. Inbreeding increases when populations are cut off from neighboring populations. The resulting lack of diversity in the gene pool weakens the species through “inbreeding depression” and reduces the population’s long-term chance of survival. A single environmental change or disease could then eliminate all members of the local population.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT GOALS, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Goal WM- Maintain and promote healthy and diverse native wildlife populations
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Policy WM-1 Understand and maintain the diversity of native wildlife.
(See WR-6 and WR-7)

- ◆ Identify wildlife usage, movement patterns, and habitat features with high value to wildlife.
- ◆ Consider and avoid or minimize impacts on wildlife when planning trails and other facilities.
- ◆ Develop a wildlife data base to record wildlife sightings and guide management decisions.
- ◆ Non-native wildlife release on District lands shall not be released onto District land, adhere to the policies identified in the Invasive Species chapter (See IS).

*Examples of wildlife using human-made structures on District lands include the Red barn at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve which is used by both the Townsend's big-eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii*) and Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*).*

Wildlife movement and safe passage is affected at a regional level by large-scale transportation needs and development including housing, roadways, and commercial development. The District works with Preserve neighbors, municipalities, counties, and regional planning organizations to improve new development projects through the use of wildlife friendly fencing, clustering new development away from sensitive areas, and providing refuge areas for wildlife.

- ◆ The District shall strive to control or remove non native wildlife using management actions identified in the Invasive Species chapter (See IS).
- ◆ Native wildlife shall not be released onto District land if it is adapted to urban conditions or interaction with human.
- ◆ Native wildlife can be released onto District preserves if the animal has been rehabilitated by an animal rescue center specializing in wildlife, it is disease-free, suitable unoccupied habitat is available, and there is a high likelihood for the animal to adapt and survive in its new surroundings without adversely affecting existing resources at the site. The rehabilitated animal should be marked or banded, if feasible, to allow monitoring of its adaptation.

Policy WM-2 Protect, maintain and **enhance** habitat features that have particular value to native wildlife. (See HC-2: Measure 5, WR-6 and WR-7)

- ◆ Inventory critical and sensitive wildlife habitats and develop management strategies for their protection.
- ◆ Leave brush piles, **snags**, and fallen trees in areas where they do not pose a fire hazard or visual blight, to provide cover and nesting sites for animals, and nursery conditions for forest seedlings.
- ◆ Evaluate the wildlife habitat value associated with human-made structures before altering or removing them and avoid or mitigate any impacts.
- ◆ Repair, modify, and maintain stock ponds as wildlife watering sources and habitat for aquatic and semi aquatic organisms (See WR-3).

Policy WM-3 Protect animal populations against the impact of human actions. (See HC-2: Measure 5)

- ◆ Discourage human intrusion into sensitive wildlife habitats by appropriate placement of facilities and trails.
- ◆ Identify and eliminate **barriers** (e.g. remove unnecessary fences, old barb wire, and other barriers) and provide safe crossings (e.g. protect established wildlife crossings and use wildlife friendly fencing) to

- ◆ Limit agricultural activities, facility development, and trail construction in riparian and other wetland areas to protect them from disturbance.
- ◆ Minimize soil disturbance associated with construction and maintenance operations.
- ◆ Seed to rehabilitate disturbed ground and lessen erosion. Time seeding projects to ensure adequate soil moisture for seed germination. Utilize mulch or other appropriate groundcover to reduce erosion where sediment can be delivered to a **watercourse** or wetland.
- ◆ Utilize **native** plants when possible for projects requiring **revegetation** for long-term erosion control. **Non-native** sterile grass seed may be used to quickly establish ground cover and reduce erosion. In areas of active **livestock** grazing, incorporation of non-invasive pasture grasses may be utilized.
- ◆ Prevent, to the extent possible, the physical removal of naturally occurring soil.

Policy GS-3 Protect unique or exceptional geologic features from human damage.

- ◆ Identify locations and document the condition of unique or exceptional geologic features (example: tafoni sandstone formations, serpentine outcrops, sag ponds).
- ◆ Monitor such features to determine if action is needed to prevent or stop damage.
- ◆ Control access to features requiring protection by informing visitors, placing signs and **barriers**, and enforcing restrictions.
- ◆ ~~Protect extremely sensitive resources through non-disclosure of location~~
- ◆ Develop security protocols to limit availability and distribution of geographic information for geology and soils resources to protect sites from accidental destruction, looting, and vandalism.

Policy GS-4 Prevent or remediate contaminated soils

VII. SCENIC AND AESTHETIC RESOURCES

BACKGROUND

The District recognizes the protection of scenic values as one of the primary benefits of **open space**. The scenic and aesthetic **resources** of District lands provide physical and psychological relief from the stresses and uniformity of urban life. They also contribute to our "sense of place" - our appreciation of the qualities that set this area apart from others and make it feel like home.

District preserves include a variety of **natural** settings and landscapes that form magnificent scenic backdrops to the urbanized peninsula. Local residents and visitors particularly appreciate the interplay of color, pattern, form, and light on the coastal mountains, where rugged topography, hot sun, wind, and fog combine to create dramatic and appealing contrasts in vegetation.

In some cases, preserving a significant scenic or **historic** landscape may involve managing it to actually *prevent* natural succession. For example, a shallow pond may gradually fill in and become a meadow or open grassland. ~~may be replaced by coastal scrub.~~ Active management through vegetation maintenance or pond deepening not only promotes the scenic and aesthetic value of a wetland setting, but may also be more beneficial to wildlife. However, in most instances, restoring or mimicking natural processes can help maintain the appealing visual and biological diversity of **native** communities.

- ◆ Respond to public information requests and promote release of non sensitive resource information to better distribute and share District scientific knowledge.
- ◆ Recruit interns and volunteers to help organize and maintain resource information files, in cooperation with the District's volunteer program.

Policy RC-2 Coordinate and cooperate with institutions, agencies, organizations, and individuals conducting resource management or research.

- ◆ Maintain a list of District related potential resource research projects. Encourage research directed to specific sites, District-related issues, or resource management practices.
- ◆ Administer the District's Resource Management Grant Program to fund projects that contribute to resource management projects. Incorporate the District's list of potential projects into the Grant Program.
- ◆ Explore partnerships and foster relationships with educational institutions, scientists, and other land management professionals in order to share information and resources and to develop Memorandums of Understanding or Memorandums of Agreement between the District and other agencies.
- ◆ Sponsor or participate in events and activities such as symposiums, workshops, and conferences that support scientific research and sound resource management practices.
- ◆ Encourage and facilitate currency on resource management techniques, such as **restoration**, **integrated pest management**, and erosion control.
- ◆ Provide internship support for appropriate research.

Policy RC-3 Undertake original research necessary for planning or management decisions.

- ◆ Carefully research existing information and explore opportunities for cooperative studies to collect additional information.

- ◆ Retain qualified consultants or researchers to conduct studies or collect additional information in a standardized format that can be integrated with the District's GIS database.
- ◆ Encourage and facilitate training of District staff to obtain environmental permits (such as scientific collection or sensitive species handling permits) in order to participate in or conduct needed research and monitoring and to maintain relationships with agency staff.
- ◆ Share significant new information through resource agency contacts and local and regional databases, such as the California Natural Diversity Data Base and Natural Resources Database.

Policy RC-4 Allow collecting, trapping, or other field research activities only in conjunction with legitimate research consistent with the District's management goals.

- ◆ Continue to administer the District's Special Use Permit Program for collection, trapping, archaeological research, or field studies on District lands.
- ◆ Require the researcher to share the information resulting from the studies with the District and other appropriate parties. If appropriate, integrate data into electronic filing system or GIS database.

Policy RC-5 Develop performance measures when designing District projects and collect monitoring data to evaluate project success.

- ◆ Research and utilize existing performance measures from comparable prior projects and partner agencies.
- ◆ Collect and evaluate monitoring data to measure project success and for use in adaptive management.
- ◆ Engage in benchmarking opportunities with public, partners, and research institutions through collaborations and the sharing of project data.

X. PUBLIC INTERPRETATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

Communication and **outreach** are key to developing broad public support for acquiring and protecting **open space**. Increasing public knowledge and appreciation of the preserves' **natural** and **cultural resources** will improve support for their conservation. The District needs to inform the public about District treasures, ~~so they will~~ it will care about protecting them.

The **resource management** program will play a vital role in this effort by providing a greatly improved information base for the public. Studying the current condition of preserve resources and discovering how best to maintain and **restore** them will reveal information that stimulates public interest, makes the preserves more enjoyable places to visit, and inspires respect and a sense of stewardship.

The District's Public Affairs department is charged with communicating this information to the public. For example, staff works closely with local schools, districts, agencies, and other special groups to provide **environmental education** and interpretive programming to students, organizations, and the general public. The Public Affairs department also gets the word out through publications, presentations, and working with the media. The volunteer and docent programs greatly increase public outreach opportunities. The volunteer program provides a means for the public to learn firsthand about stewardship, by participating in District projects. The docent program trains docents to conduct activities on the preserves and interpret District resources. Docents also staff the Daniels Nature Center and lead environmental science-based field trips for students.

Environmental education is typically a curriculum-based approach targeted toward students to attain an ultimate goal (such as environmental stewardship). The District's environmental science-based programming was established in 1996 and serves elementary school students in a field trip experience at the District's Daniel's Nature Center and surrounding

Patch – A relatively homogenous type of habitat that is spatially separated from other similar habitat and differs from its surroundings. (Habitat Connectivity)

Pathogen – A disease causing organism. (Vegetation Management, Forest Management)

Performance Measure(s) – Parameter(s) used to measure project success tied to project goals and objectives.

Pesticides – A broad term used to describe any material (natural, organic, or synthetic) used to control or prevent pests including herbicides (weed or plant killers), insecticides (insect killers), and rodenticides (rodent killers). (Invasive Species)

Pests – Animals or plants that proliferate beyond natural control and interfere with the natural processes which would otherwise occur on open space lands. (Invasive Species, Forest Management, Wildland Fire)

Plant Community – A group of plants growing in an interrelated manner on a particular site. (Vegetation Management, Invasive Species, Ecological Succession, Wildland Fire)

Predation – a biological interaction where a predator (an organism that is hunting or browsing) feeds on its prey (the organism that is hunted or consumed). (Invasive Species, Wildlife Management, Habitat Connectivity)

Prehistoric – Dating from periods of human activity prior to the use of written history. In the American West, prehistory generally refers to all periods before European colonization of the region. (Cultural Resources)

Prescribed Fire – Fire applied to wildland ecosystems under specified fuel and weather conditions to accomplish predetermined resource management objective such as regeneration of sensitive species in a fire-adapted plant community. (Wildland Fire)

Programming – The regularly scheduled organized, topic-specific presentations or other delivery of information, including community outreach,

XVII. REFERENCES

[California Department of Fish and Game
California Natural Diversity Database \(CNDDB\)
http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/t_e_spp/index.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/t_e_spp/index.html)

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