



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-11-82  
Meeting 11-21  
August 10, 2011

## **AGENDA ITEM 6**

### **AGENDA ITEM**

Approval to Add the Mindego Gateway Project as a New Key Project to the District Fiscal Year 2011-12 Action Plan and Authorization to Enter into a Partnership Agreement with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to Designate Roles and Responsibilities for Project Implementation

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Approve the addition of the Mindego Gateway Project as a New Key Project to the District Fiscal Year 2011-12 Action Plan, with the Planning Department acting as lead.
2. Authorize the General Manager to enter into an agreement with POST to fund specific tasks associated with the planning, design, and construction of the Mindego Gateway Project at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve.

### **SUMMARY**

The District has an opportunity to expand its long-standing partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) by working together not only on acquisition projects, but also on new capital improvement projects. At this time, POST is specifically interested in funding a new staging area and associated trails near the proposed Audrey Rust Commemorative Site in the Mindego area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. To begin this exciting new partnership and meet POST's scheduling goals, the District would need to include this proposed new project as part of the Fiscal Year 2011-12 Action Plan.

### **DISCUSSION**

The 97.5 acre former Silva Property and the 1,100-acre former Mindego Ranch were recently added as part of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. The recreation potential, diverse natural resources, and threat of development made Mindego Ranch a high priority for conservation. The property is a stunning example of the upland San Mateo Coast and provides significant habitat and biodiversity values, with four major aquatic sites harboring a population of the federally-endangered San Francisco garter snake. Mindego Hill, a 2,143-foot peak visible for miles and offering panoramic coastal views from its summit, represents a pinnacle of the long-standing conservation partnership between POST and the District. The recently-purchased, former Silva Property located approximately one mile to the east, offers views of Mindego Hill and the Pacific

coast beyond, as well as important frontage onto Alpine Road. As such, POST has kept these two properties in mind as a focus for funding potential public access improvements. This intention was memorialized as part of the former Silva property purchase agreement between the District and POST, in which POST reserved the right to work with the District to potentially implement a commemorative site, staging area, and trail at a later date (see Report R-11-14):

Working collaboratively with POST, study the feasibility of a POST-sponsored recognition site landscape feature potentially including a public staging area and trail. Implementation of such a feature is contingent on future environmental review and regulatory requirements.

Consistent with the Purchase Agreement, POST first approached the District with the desire to exercise its right to a Recognition Site. The District has been working with POST to develop and obtain Board-approved design guidelines for this feature and review preliminary plans (see Report R-11-66). During this period of time, POST also expressed its desire to partner with the District to move forward with a new staging area and select trails in this area of the Preserve. Based on a very preliminary evaluation of the Silva property and surrounding lands, District staff has concluded that a staging area and associated trails are feasible at this site and desirable to improve public access, establish new trail loops, open the Mindego area of the Preserve, and address future parking use.

The former Silva property contains a graded area along Alpine Road that provides an ideal location for a staging area. Based on a preliminary review of the site and a parking needs assessment for the Preserve conducted by staff, a new staging area for approximately 25 cars with an overflow parking area to accommodate special events seems appropriate at this time (pending further review). New, short trails would connect the staging area, the future Commemorative Site, and the existing Mindego Ridge Trail. The surrounding land also lends itself to a new, approximately 1-mile trail that could connect the proposed staging area to the Ancient Oaks Trail to the north, providing a potential loop opportunity with the Mindego Ridge Trail (see Attachment A, Project Area Map).

POST has begun fundraising for these desired improvements and expects to complete its fundraising campaign by the end of the calendar year. At this time, and if approved by the Board, POST anticipates sufficient funding will be available to cover the costs for planning, design, permitting, and construction of the proposed project, as well as project management (staff time). Depending on the total funds raised, and Board project approval, POST will also consider reimbursing the District for staff and materials costs associated with long-term facility maintenance.

In order for the District to proceed with this proposed project, District staff will need to re-prioritize staff assignments on current District projects with the expectation that lower priority projects will be temporarily halted and their schedules extended. District staff will consider using the savings resulting from POST reimbursement of District project management staff to hire temporary employees to backfill capacity for the District's affected projects.

If this item is approved by the Board, roles and responsibilities would be assigned as follows:

#### District Roles and Responsibilities

- Include the proposed project as part of the FY2011-12 Action Plan.

- Enter into a Partnership Agreement with POST that details the roles and responsibilities for the project as set out in this report.
- Dedicate staff time to manage the overall project from planning through implementation and close out.
- Manage the following project elements: a) new staging area along Alpine Road; b) new trail connection to Ancient Oaks Trail; c) habitat assessment for this area of the Preserve to identify management and design recommendations that will allow implementation of the project while protecting highly sensitive natural resources.
- Incorporate the new Mindego Hill Trail into the larger Mindego Gateway project to review all proposed public access improvements together under CEQA.
- Establish the overall project budget and schedule with POST review and concurrence.
- Conduct public contracting and bidding for all consulting services and contracted work as required for completing the District-managed components of the project.
- Dedicate field staff time to build suitable portions of the project (e.g. trail construction).
- Assign the Use and Management (U&M) Committee to review planning and design for each project component.
- Assign the Legislative, Finance, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) to review trail naming requests.
- Provide final District Board approval for all components of the project.

#### POST Roles and Responsibilities

- Enter into a Partnership Agreement with the District that details the roles and responsibilities for the project as set out in this report.
- Reimburse District for all planning project management staff; all required consultant services (with the exception of \$25,000 for archaeological surveys, which is already included in the District's Action Plan)); all agency plan check and permitting costs; and all construction implementation costs, including field staff time for trail construction, based on a mutually agreed-upon project budget.
- Dependent on fundraising, fund long-term maintenance costs for all components of the project.
- Manage the Audrey Rust Commemorative Site from planning through implementation and close out; adhere to District Board-approved Design Guidelines; provide District with project milestone updates and integrate District review comments; obtain final District design approval and include District as part of construction inspections.

#### FISCAL IMPACT

If this item is approved by the Board, the Partnership Agreement with POST will confirm in writing that all of the District's costs associated with the Mindego Gateway project, as delineated above, will be funded by POST. As such, no additional capital funding is required to be allocated by the District for implementation. The District may use salary savings gained from this partnership to pay for temporary staffing to continue District projects that would otherwise have to be deferred as a result of adding the Mindego Gateway Project to the District FY2011-12 Action Plan. Therefore, these improvements would result in no fiscal impact to the District budget and would not require a re-evaluation of the Operating or Capital Improvement Program Guidelines. Outside funding for long-term maintenance will be dependent on additional fundraising success by POST.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice has been provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The recommended Board actions will not result in a direct change to the physical environment. These actions merely begin the planning phase of a new proposed project, which will be subject to future environmental review to be completed at a later date, prior to any physical implementation.

**NEXT STEPS**

Upon Board action, the Planning Department would include the Mindego Gateway Project as a New Key Project to the District Fiscal Year 2011-12 Action Plan and formally set aside staff resources for work on this project. District staff would also begin the detailed planning and design process, including working with the U&M Committee in public meetings starting in the fall to evaluate design goals and assumptions and with LFPAC to review trail naming requests. District staff expects to complete the design and environmental review by the first quarter of 2012, at which time the item would return to the Board for approval. Permitting would occur in 2012, with phased project implementation expected in 2012 through 2014.

Concurrently, staff will consider hiring temporary employees to backfill the staff time that is allocated to this project to avoid significant impacts to existing District projects.

Also, to formalize the partnership with POST, the General Manager will enter into a Partnership Agreement that will clearly designate roles and responsibilities prior to entering into future consulting services contracts in support of the project.

District staff expects to present to the Board a series of consultant contracts at the next Board meeting for design and environmental review (CEQA) services.

## Attachments:

- A. Project Area Map

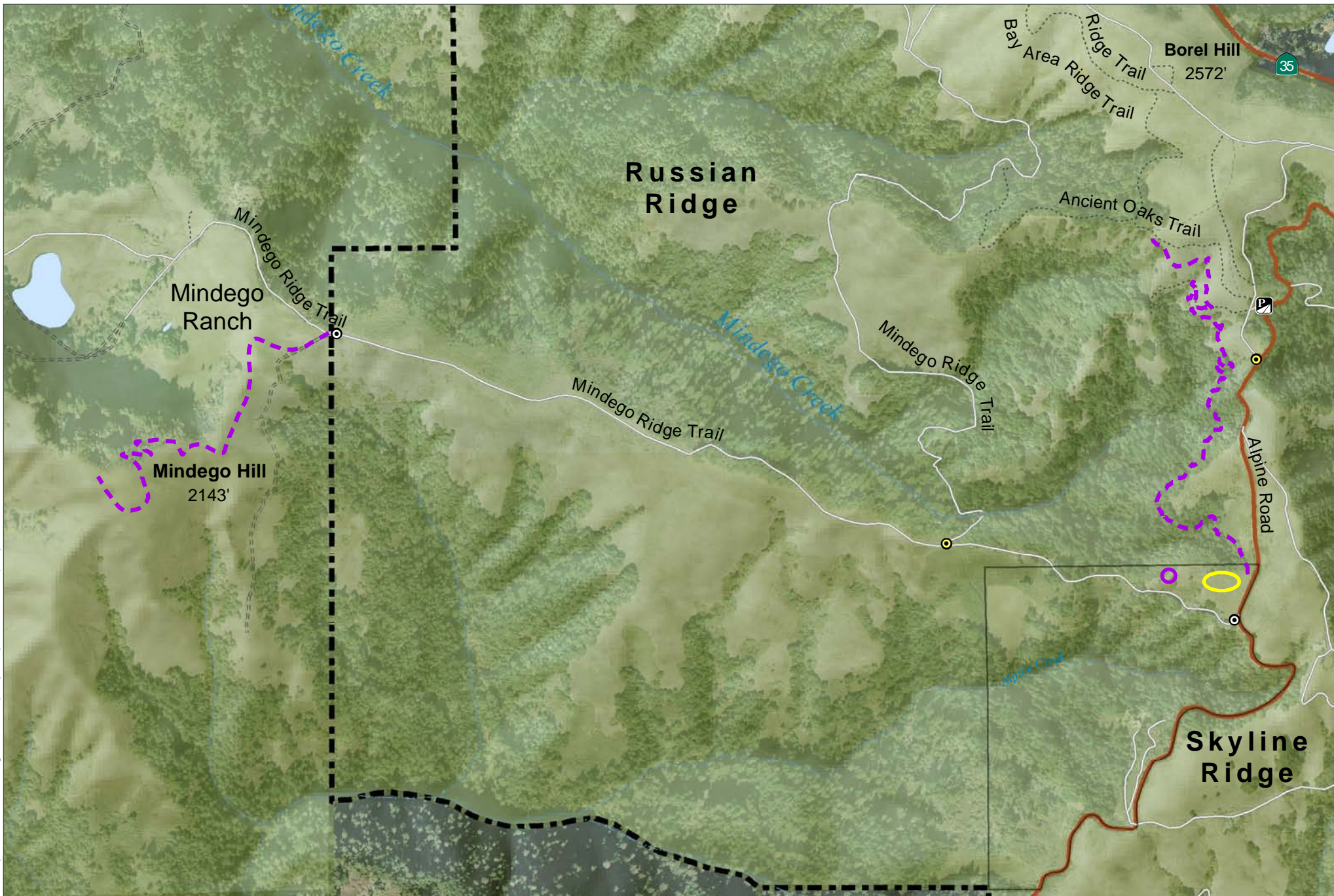
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### Attachment A: Project Area Map

-  Proposed Commemorative Site Location
-  Proposed New Trail
-  Proposed Staging Area Location
-  Gate
-  Coastal Protection Area
-  Roadside Parking

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