



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: October 14, 2011

TO: Use and Management Committee

THROUGH: Steve Abbors, General Manager

FROM: Gina Coony, Project Manager, Lisa Bankosh, Open Space Planner II

SUBJECT: Mindego Gateway Project at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

In partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), the District is proposing to construct a new parking lot/staging area and two new connector trails in the Mindego Area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Preserve) (Exhibit A). POST would also construct a commemorative site adjacent to the staging area to honor the conservation achievements of its former president Audrey Rust. These new public-access facilities collectively form the proposed Mindego Gateway Project.

Purpose of Meeting

- Obtain input and consensus from the Use and Management Committee authorizing staff to proceed with design development of the parking lot and staging area following the conceptual design presented herein;
- Obtain input and consensus from the Committee on proposed trail alignments.

Project Summary

During summer 2011, the District Board of Directors approved the Mindego Gateway Project as a new Key Project, created a series of design guidelines for the Audrey Rust Commemorative Site (to be constructed by POST), and authorized contracts with a team of consultants including landscape architects, CEQA specialists, and biologists to plan and design the staging area and trail connections (see Reports R-11-82, 86, and 87). District staff is now seeking a recommendation from the Use and Management Committee to move forward with design of these project elements. Staff design recommendations are summarized below.

Mindego Gateway Parking Lot and Staging Area

The parking lot and staging area would be constructed on a previously graded flat area, formerly used as an equipment yard, along Alpine Road approximately 1.4 miles west of Skyline Boulevard. The conceptual parking lot and staging area design includes the following:

- A total of 20 designated parking spaces, including 18 regular width spaces, plus 2 ADA spaces, at 90-degree angles to the driving aisles;
- Overflow parking for 42 additional vehicles,
- Entrance located at current driveway location, equidistant from uphill and downhill curves, providing best possible line of sight;
- Balanced grading, with equal amounts of cut and fill;
- Partial or full asphalt surfaces proposed to reduce maintenance;
- Native trees planted to enhance views, and provide shade;

- Swales and infiltration areas in the median and along outer edges of parking lot to mitigate impacts of parking lot runoff on the neighboring creeks;
- Adjacent trailhead providing signage, District-standard vault restroom, bicycle parking, and transition zone to trail connections and Commemorative Site
- Paths west to the Commemorative Site, south to Mindego Ridge Trail, and north to Ancient Oaks Connector Trail surfaced in base rock, decomposed granite or concrete.

Trails

Two new trails are proposed as part of the Mindego Gateway Project: 1) the “Mindego Hill Trail”, a 0.75-mile long spur from the Mindego Ridge Trail (to the summit of Mindego Hill, and 2) the “Ancient Oaks Connector Trail” a 1.2-mile connector from the proposed staging area north to the Ancient Oaks Trail. The Mindego Hill Trail alignment was designed by staff and the District’s consulting engineering geologist and was approved by the Use and Management Committee in June 2010. The proposed alignment avoids potential geological hazards, maintains a gentle grade, and was situated to maximize distance to sensitive habitat areas.

The Ancient Oaks Connector Trail was also designed by staff and is being presented for review by the Use and Management Committee at this time. The proposed alignment traverses a wide range of terrain, from relatively level to steep, to connect the proposed staging area with the existing Russian Ridge trail network to the north. The proposed trail would begin at the northeastern corner of the new staging area and follow an old road alignment through level coastal scrub, then transition into shady woodland with relatively steep sideslopes. Several creek crossings would be required. Eventually the trail emerges in open grassland, contouring gently to meet the majestic trees at the Ancient Oaks trail. The new trail would facilitate an enjoyable, relatively short loop experience in an area that currently lacks such trail opportunities. Preserve users could complete an approximately 4-mile loop from the proposed staging area, along the proposed Ancient Oaks Connector Trail, down the Ancient Oaks Trail, and back to the staging area along the Mindego Ridge Trail.

In June 2010, the Use and Management Committee recommended that potential uses of Mindego Hill Trail be examined as part of a Habitat Management Plan for San Francisco garter snake, an endangered species known to occur at the former Mindego Ranch. The District has hired a team of frog and snake specialists (herpetologists) to work collaboratively with staff to develop the Habitat Management Plan, which includes establishing guidelines for recreational use in known or potential garter snake habitat. Staff is currently analyzing potential uses of both the proposed Mindego Hill Trail and Ancient Oak Connector Trail, and will present recommendations to the Committee at a future meeting this fall.

Next steps

The following are the next steps needed to proceed with the project:

- Forward the Use and Management Committee’s recommendation regarding the proposed project elements to the full Board of Directors for tentative approval
- Complete environmental analysis and seek Board approval and environmental review certification
- Conduct engineering geological review of proposed Ancient Oaks Connector Trail alignment
- Obtain permits
- Construct project

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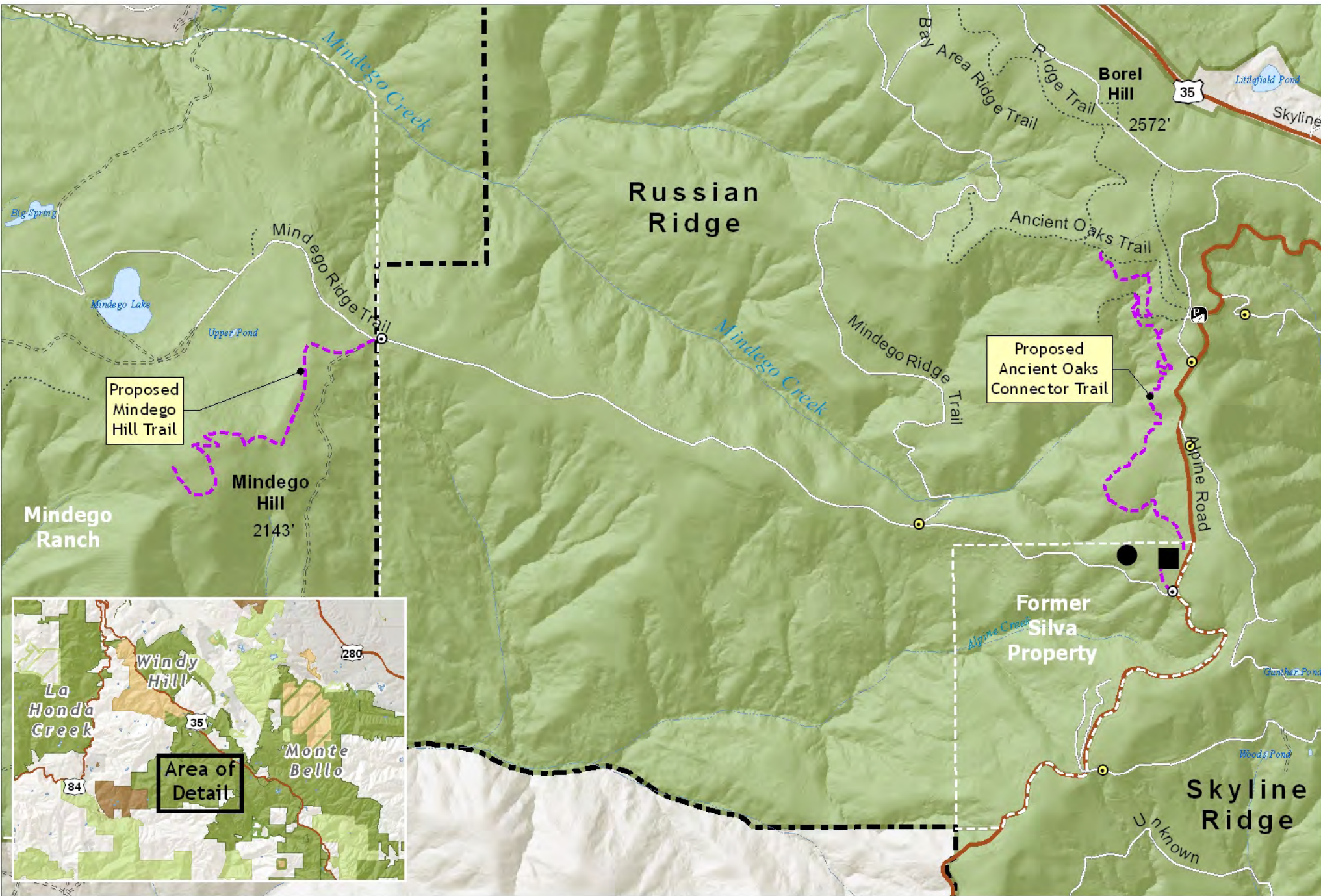


EXHIBIT A: Mindego Gateway Project

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

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