



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

SPECIAL MEETING

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT USE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, California 94022

Thursday, November 10, 2011

1:00 p.m.

A G E N D A

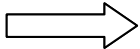
1:00 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE USE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT – PUBLIC SESSION

ROLL CALL

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS: DIRECTOR KISHIMOTO, CHAIR
DIRECTOR CYR
DIRECTOR HARRIS**

1:05 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1:10 COMMITTEE BUSINESS



1. Receive staff presentation and consider approval of trail use recommendations as described in the attached memo for the Mindego Gateway Project at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve – L. Bankosh and G. Laustsen

2:30 2. Receive staff presentation and consider approval of new trail designation to formally add the Black Mountain Trail Extension Easement as a hiking and equestrian trail, with the recommended site improvements, as a part of the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve trail network, and name it the “Quarry Trail”- M. Manning

4:00 ADJOURNMENT

TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE: The Chair will invite public comment on agenda items at the time each item is considered by the Committee. Each speaker will ordinarily be limited to three minutes. Alternately, you may comment to the Committee by a written communication, which the Committee appreciates.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the District Clerk at (650) 691-1200. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Written materials relating to an item on this Agenda that are considered to be a public record and are distributed to Committee members less than 72 hours prior to the meeting will be available for public inspection at the District's Administrative Office located at 330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, California 94022.



DATE: November 10, 2011

TO: Use and Management Committee

THROUGH: Steve Abbors, General Manager

FROM: Lisa Bankosh, Open Space Planner II,
Gretchen Laustsen, Open Space Planner I

SUBJECT: Mindego Gateway Project Trail Use at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

Purpose of Meeting

- Present the proposed trail use recommendations for the Mindego Gateway Project;
- Seek public and Committee input on these trail use recommendations, and;
- Arrive at Committee consensus on trail use, which staff would then forward to the full Board of Directors for consideration and approval.

Background

The Mindego Gateway Project, which includes a new parking lot/staging area, the Audrey Rust Commemorative Site, and two new trails in the Mindego area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (Exhibit A), was added to the District's Key Project list by the Board of Directors in August 2011. Proposed alignments for the two new trails, as well as a conceptual design of the staging area, were reviewed and approved by the Use and Management Committee in October 2011. Prior Committee review of the proposed Mindego Hill Trail in June 2010 resulted in the recommendation that potential uses of the new trail be examined closely in light of the close proximity to a breeding population of San Francisco garter snake, an endangered species with "Fully Protected" status. The District hired Biosearch Associates, a team of biologists with extensive expertise in monitoring and managing sensitive reptiles and amphibians, to develop recommendations for trail use in San Francisco garter snake habitat.

Project Summary

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 with review from a 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 approved by the Use and Management Committee in October 2011. 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.

Proposed Trail Use (Refer to Exhibit A)

In consultation with Biosearch Associates, Staff analyzed potential uses, including hiking, biking, and equestrian use, of the proposed Mindego Hill Trail, the proposed Ancient Oaks Connector Trail, and the existing segment of Mindego Ridge Trail that stretches between the proposed staging area site to the Mindego Hill Trail (dog use was not considered since this Preserve is not open to dogs). Known populations of California red-legged frog, San Francisco garter snake, and Western pond turtle occur within ponds and springs on the former Mindego Ranch. While the proposed trails are located at a minimum of 1,500 feet away and would therefore not directly affect this habitat, introducing trail use in the vicinity could result in disturbance or direct impacts to these species as they move across the Mindego area and between ponds in the surrounding region. Impacts to San Francisco garter snake are of particular concern. In addition to its Endangered status, this species is listed by the California Department of Fish and Game as "Fully Protected", or "No Take". Fully Protected status provides additional protection to species that are extremely rare and could likely face extinction; it is the maximum level of protection given to any plant or animal. With the exception of a few actions specifically intended to promote the recovery of these species, all actions that could cause either direct or indirect harm, harassment, or death of a Fully Protected species are prohibited by law.

Many factors influence the likelihood that a San Francisco garter snake could occur within the Mindego Gateway trail corridors. Among these factors, and of primary importance, is the location of the new trails in relation to occupied aquatic habitat areas. Following a site-specific analysis of the recorded observations, location, and quality of aquatic habitat on the former Mindego Ranch, Biosearch Associates developed a series of recommendations to ensure that "Take" of this species is avoided to the maximum extent possible. These recommendations are summarized below.

- Limit use of the Mindego Hill Trail to hikers and equestrians only;
- Install a gate along Mindego Ridge Trail, approximately 0.5 miles from its intersection with Alpine Road (at the junction with Mindego Creek Trail) and prohibit bicycle access beyond this point;
- Permit horse watering only at designated troughs;
- Construct Mindego Hill Trail with as little grading or other surface disturbance as possible;

- Other than emergencies, limit vehicle access within 2000-feet of aquatic habitat occupied by San Francisco garter snake to daily patrols and authorized persons that follow a 5-mph speed limit.

In consultation with the biologists, Staff determined that because there is adequate distance between the Ancient Oaks Connector Trail and aquatic habitat occupied by San Francisco garter snake, the Ancient Oaks Connector Trail can be opened to all uses (hiking, equestrian use, and mountain biking). This would allow hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists to utilize the approximately 4-mile loop that extends 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.

Recommendations

Staff recommends designating the proposed Mindego Hill Trail and adjacent segment of Mindego Ridge Trail as hiking and equestrian-only trails. The Mindego Hill Trail will be built primarily using hand tools and will average a width of two feet. Further, staff recommends designating the proposed Ancient Oaks Connector Trail as a multi-use trail. The trail will average three to five feet in width and will be built with standard trail-building equipment such as a mini-excavator and small bulldozer.

Next steps

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

- Obtain consensus from the Use and Management Committee regarding the trail use recommendations for the Mindego Gateway Project
- Forward the Use and Management Committee's recommendation to the full Board of Directors for their consideration and tentative approval
- Complete an environmental analysis and seek Board final approval and environmental review certification
- Conduct engineering geological review of the proposed Ancient Oaks Connector Trail alignment
- Develop construction plans
- Obtain permits
- Construct project

Attachments

Exhibit A: Mindego Gateway Project Map

Created By: glauitsen Path: G:\Projects\Russian_Ridge\MindegoGatewayProject\TrailUse.mxd

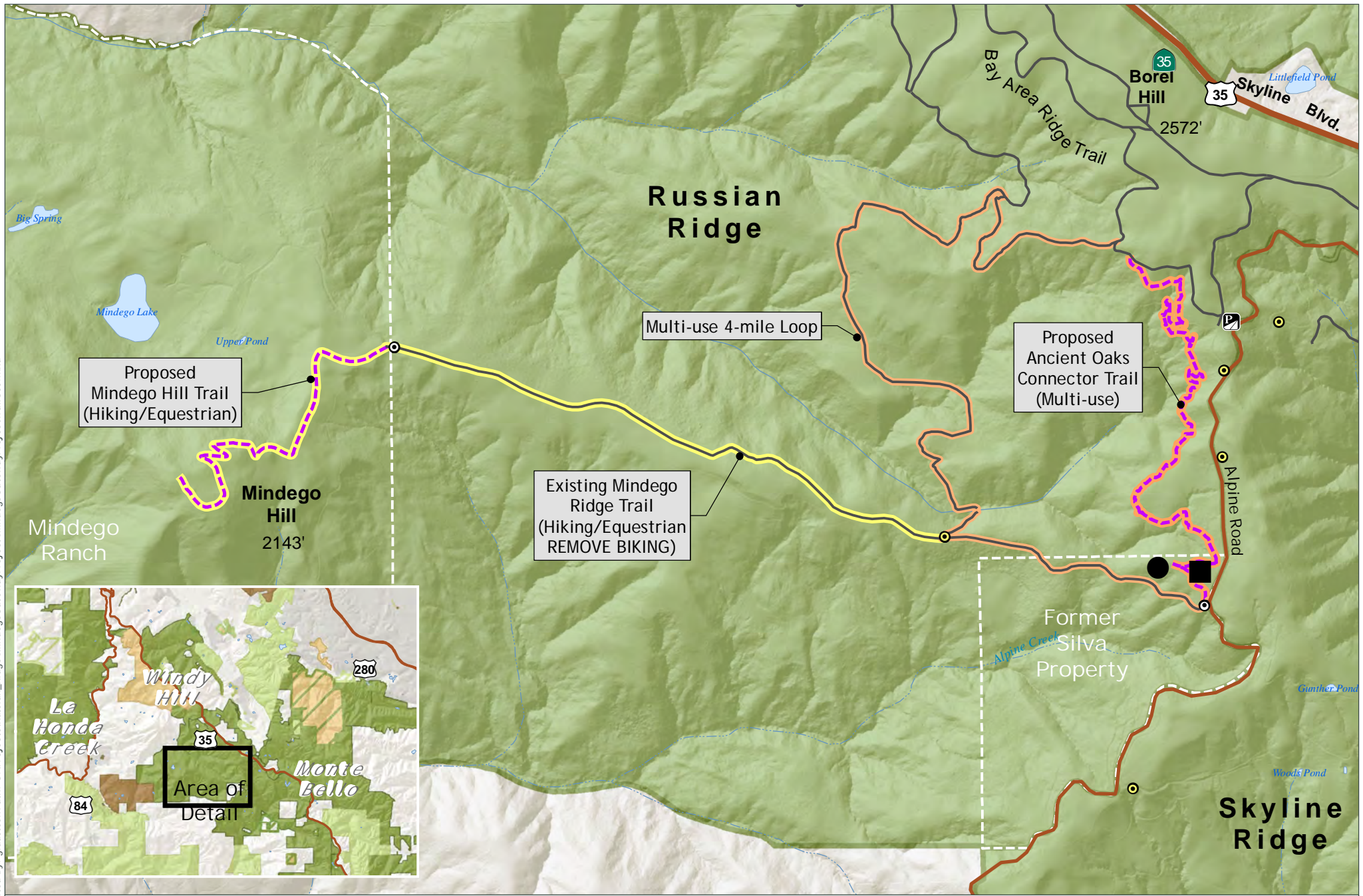


EXHIBIT A: Mindego Gateway Project

- Proposed New Trail
- Proposed- Hiking/Equestrian
- Existing/Proposed- Multi-use Trail Loop
- Existing Multi-use Public Trail
- Multi-use (hiking, biking, equestrian)
- Gate
- Proposed Commemorative Location
- Proposed Staging Area Location
- P Roadside Parking

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