



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-15-40
February 24, 2015

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Use and Management Plan Amendment to Close Two Designated Trail Segments at Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve to Improve Visitor Safety

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION(S)

The General Manager recommends the Committee approve the following recommendations for the full Board of Directors' consideration:

1. Find that the recommended actions are Categorically Exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
2. Adopt a Use and Management Plan Amendment to close the majority of the Lobitos Creek Trail in Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve except for the first ¼ mile.
3. Adopt a Use and Management Plan Amendment to close the last ¼ mile of the North Ridge Trail in Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve.

SUMMARY

Two remote trail segments in Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve, which total 1.25 miles, have become impassable or difficult to access safely. Both trails are dead-end segments of longer trails in interior sections of the Preserve, have low public demand for access, and therefore have had very low public use for a significant period of time. Over time, with this very infrequent use, these short trail segments have begun to naturally revegetate. This Use and Management Plan amendment would remove these trails from Preserve maps and brochures, to avoid confusion and improve visitor safety.

DISCUSSION

Lobitos Creek Trail

The Lobitos Creek Trail segment proposed for closure is a remote, 1-mile trail segment in Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve, that is a dead-end spur off of the Irish Ridge Trail (Attachments 1 and 2). This trail segment is located 2.9 miles from the nearest trailhead, which only has roadside parking for two cars. The closest popular parking area at Higgins Canyon Road and the Purisima Road intersection is 5.3 miles away. Due to its isolated nature and the fact that accessing the trail requires an out and back trip, as opposed to being part of a loop, the

trail has been very lightly used. Since about 2004, due to a road failure that made it inaccessible for tractor brushing, the Skyline maintenance crew has discontinued brushing all but the first 0.25 mile of the trail, which leads to an interesting old growth redwood tree. The remaining 1.0 mile of trail has naturally revegetated.

The Lobitos Creek Trail was first designated as an official trail with adoption of a preliminary use and management plan as part of acquisition of the former Tysen property (see Report 97-36), when all existing roads on the property were opened as trails for hiking only “until the trails element of the Comprehensive Use and Management Plan is reviewed.” In lieu of a comprehensive planning process, the Lobitos Creek Trail has remained a designated trail, but is posted on-site and on the preserve map as “unmaintained”. This can create confusion, and the potential for visitors to lose their way in a remote section of the Preserve. Therefore, the General Manager recommends maintaining the first segment of the Lobitos Creek Trail only, and removing the unmaintained 1-mile segment from the Preserve maps and brochures. The old trail alignment would remain in the GIS system as a closed trail, for future planning purposes.

North Ridge Trail

The North Ridge Trail is a popular and well used trail particularly by mountain bicyclists. Both hikers and cyclists use the trail to access the Whittemore Gulch Trail which is also very popular. After the intersection with the Whittemore Gulch Trail, the North Ridge Trail becomes a moderate use trail since it is an out and back hike on a steep fire road. However, it is still popular because it leads to a knoll from which there are stunning views of Half Moon Bay. Near the end of the trail, the alignment begins a steep descent on a talus slope of broken rock. There are limited views from this segment of the trail and it descends to a gate at the preserve boundary that necessitates a quick return up the steep unstable trail surface.

After receiving two complaints about the safety of the trail, the end of the North Ridge Trail was posted not maintained beyond this point in the fall of 2014. Reopening the last segment of the trail would take a major reroute or extensive grading and rocking. The public benefit would be limited since most visitors would avoid the last segment due to its steepness and dead-end. The recommendation would end the North Ridge Trail prior to this steep dead-end segment and continue to provide a rigorous out and back experience with beautiful vistas of the Pacific Ocean on clear days.

FISCAL IMPACT

There will be minor costs associated with signing and potential fencing of approximately \$400 which will be covered in the Operations Department budget for barriers and fencing in the FY15-16 budget. In the long term, the cessation of maintenance activities on these trails will result in cost savings to the District.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The District concludes that closing segments of the Lobitos Creek Trail and the North Ridge Trail in Purisima Creek Preserve will not have a significant effect on the environment. The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under section 15301 as follows:

Section 15301 exempts the operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing structures or facilities such as trails, which does not expand existing use. This proposal would make a minor reduction in public access with no or negligible expansion of use, and therefore falls within the exemptions set out in section 15301.

NEXT STEPS

If the Planning and Natural Resources Committee approves the General Manager's recommendation it will be brought to the full Board for consideration at the next available meeting.

Attachment(s)

1. Regional Map of Purisima Creek Preserve Proposed Trail Closures
2. Map of Purisima Creek Preserve Proposed Trail Closures

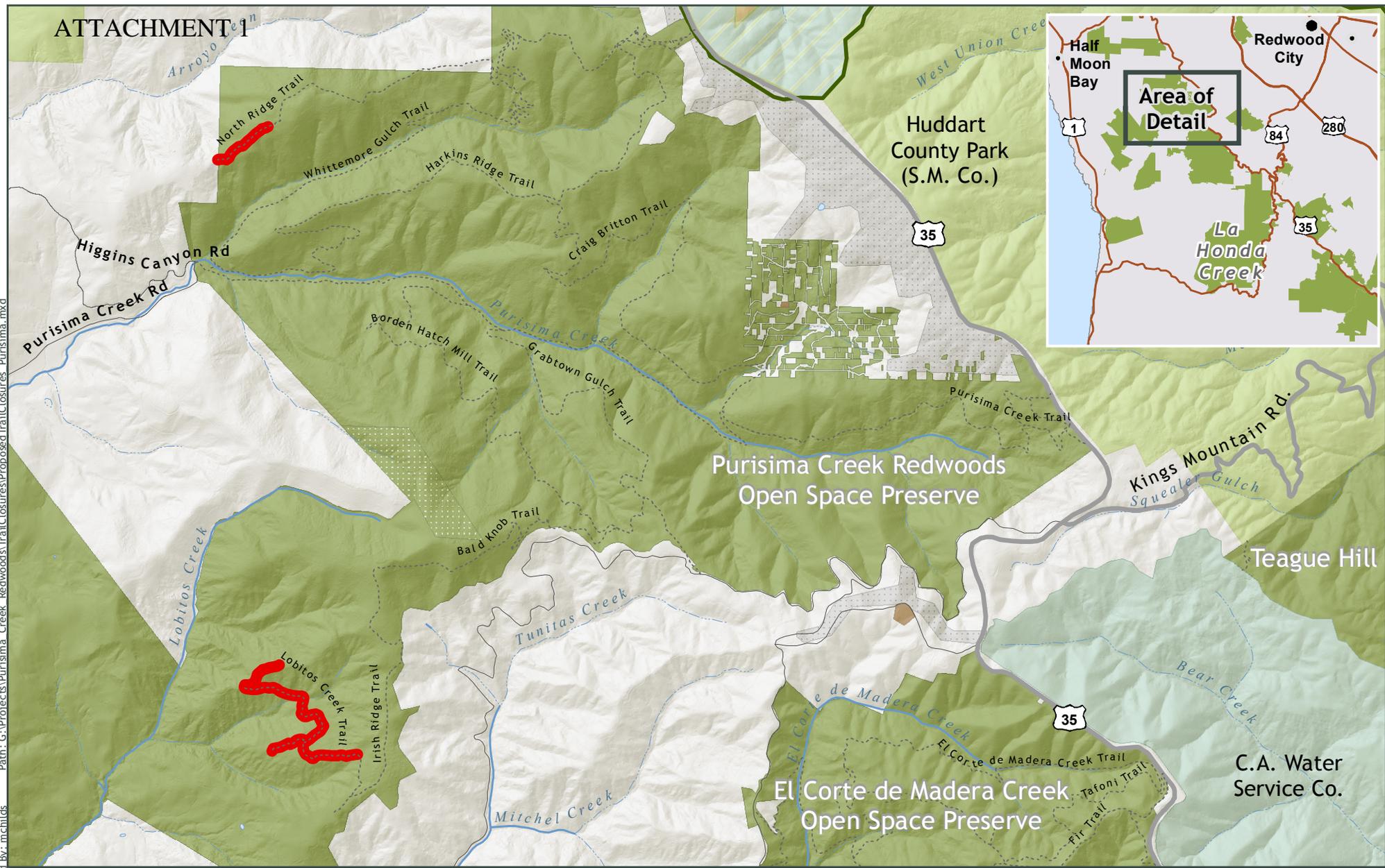
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Created By: mchilids



Proposed Purisima Creek Preserve Trail Closures

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Proposed Closure |  Other Protected Open Space or Park Lands |  Watershed Land |
|  Trail |  Non MROSD Conservation or Agricultural Easement |  Private Property |
|  MROSD Preserves |  Partial MROSD Ownership |  Developed Land |
| | |  Other Public Agency |

Use and Management Committee Meeting
(2/24/15)

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
(MROSD)

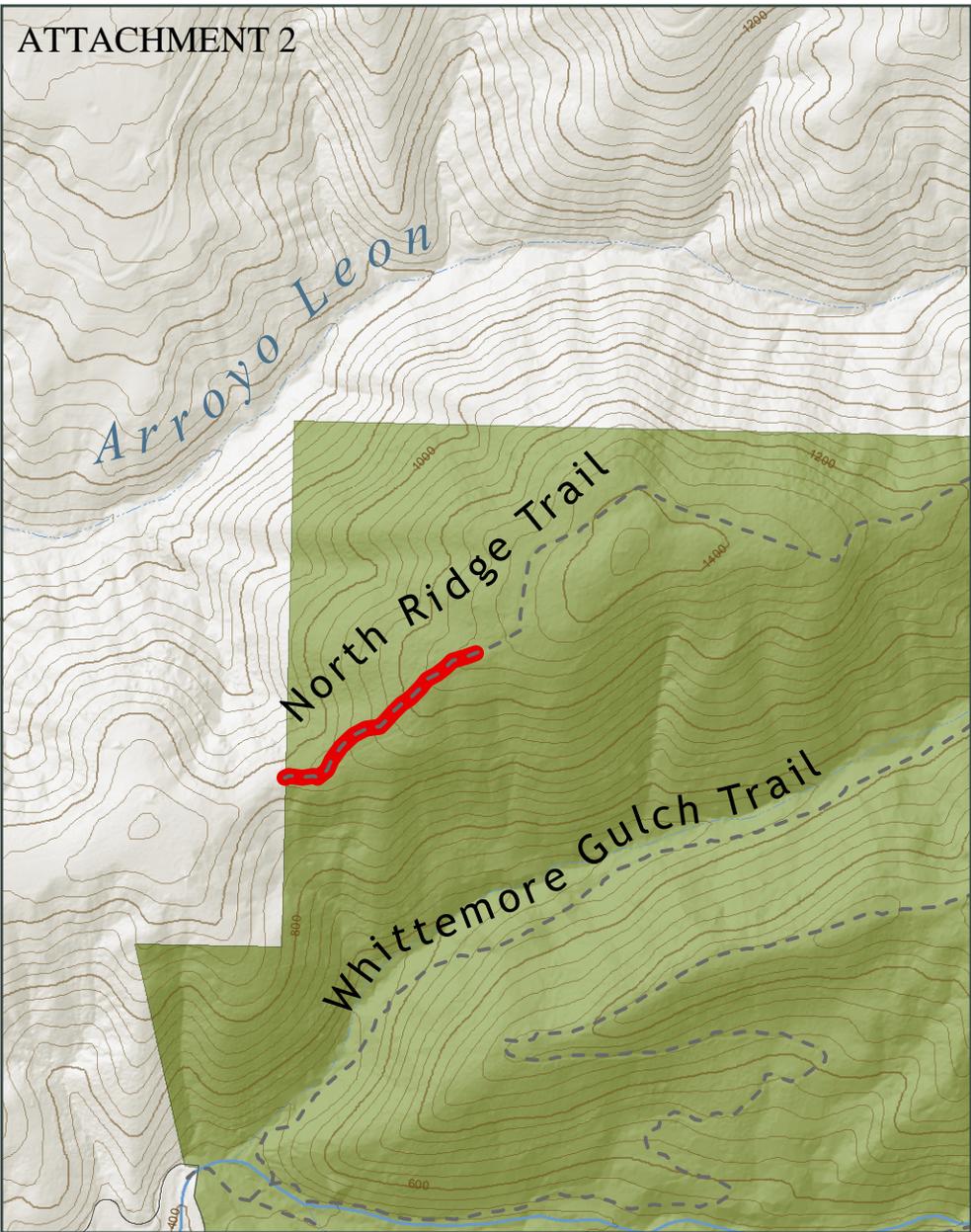


February, 2015

While the District strives to use the best available digital data, this data does not represent a legal survey and is merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.

ATTACHMENT 2

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Proposed Purisima Creek Preserve Trail Closures

- Proposed Closure
- Trail
- MROSD Preserves
- Other Protected Open Space or Park Lands
- Non MROSD Conservation or Agricultural Easement
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- Watershed Land
- Private Property
- Developed Land
- Other Public Agency

Use and Management Committee Meeting
(2/24/15)

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD)



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