




Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: August 28, 2019

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager 

FROM: Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager  
Brian Malone, Assistant General Manager for Visitor and Field Services

SUBJECT: Agricultural Policy Project – Update on Process and Schedule

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A proposed scope and schedule for clarifying and defining Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) role in agricultural preservation was provided to the Board of Directors (Board) as an FYI on August 22, 2018 (attached). This memorandum proposed an ambitious scope of work beginning with a review of existing policies, guidelines and practices. Staff envisioned a project scope that included several workshops and study sessions to further develop understanding and knowledge regarding the issues and opportunities associated with supporting agriculture within District boundaries.

### **Revisions to Proposed Approach for Policy Review and Development**

Staff has begun researching potential agricultural policy issues and practices of other organizations and agencies. As this research has progressed, a couple of revisions to the proposed approach have been identified that benefit the policy development process. The primary changes to the agricultural policy development process are: 1) Shifting the order of a workshop to compile existing agricultural policy and program information from peer agencies (this workshop was renamed Peer Agency Workshop from Partner Agency Workshop to better reflect its intent to include agencies not currently working with the District) and 2) to replace a coastal agricultural summit as originally envisioned with a workshop focused on the District's role in supporting agriculture on the San Mateo coast (a summit co-sponsored with San Mateo County is not possible at this time, but may be considered for a future year).

The revised Agricultural Policy development process is described in more detail below:

#### *1) Review Existing Agricultural Policies, Guidelines, and Practices – COMPLETED:*

A Board study session was held on March 27, 2019 (R-19-36). Prior to the study session staff reviewed the goals of the project with the San Mateo Farm Bureau and advised them of the Board study session. Several members of the Farm Bureau attended the study session.

#### *2) Peer Agency Workshop:*

Staff is currently preparing materials for a workshop focused on peer agencies to be held at the TomKat Ranch in Pescadero. The focus of this workshop is to gain insights in the current programs offered and practices implemented by peer agencies; the successes, challenges, and lessons learned using case studies; and the gaps or deficiencies that are present within the District's jurisdiction where the District may consider playing a greater role. Due to logistic issues, this workshop will not be subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act and will be limited to District staff and attendance by a non-quorum group of representative Board members (Directors Hassett, Kersteen-Tucker, and Rifle). The full Board and public will have an

opportunity to hear directly from the peer agencies and ask questions of their practices at a subsequent public meeting in January/February 2020 (refer to Item 4 below).

Invited Peer Agency Attendees:

- TomKat Ranch Education Foundation
- Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
- Coastside Land Trust
- San Mateo County Planning
- CA State Parks
- Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation
- East Bay Regional Parks District
- San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner
- SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education
- University of California Cooperative Extension
- UC Elkus Ranch
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

Timeline:

- September 2019

3) *San Mateo Coast Agricultural Producer Workshop:*

Hosting an Agricultural Workshop with San Mateo County producers will provide the full Board and staff an opportunity to understand the priority issues and concerns of a wide breadth of local agricultural producers to receive the full range of viewpoints (e.g. conventional, organic, row crops, tree farms, vineyards, etc.). Topics may include farm labor housing, infrastructure, public access, and water use. If time allows, the workshop may include site tour(s) of working lands.

Timeline:

- November 2019 – December 2019

4) *San Mateo Coast Agriculture Study Session:*

Staff will compile the information and feedback from prior workshops regarding opportunities for the District to support agriculture. Staff will consult with the San Mateo Farm Bureau to receive input regarding areas of interest to the Farm Bureau. Using this information, a skeleton structure of the agricultural policy topics will be assembled for presentation to the Board at a Study Session. At this public meeting, staff will present the information received from peer agencies, agricultural producers, and the Farm Bureau. Peer organizations and agricultural producers will be invited to present their programs and practices and answer questions directly from the full Board.

Timeline:

- January 2020 – February 2020

5) *Midpen Policy, Guidelines, Practices:*

Information, feedback, and Board direction will be used to either update the existing policies, guidelines and practices, or develop a new comprehensive set of policies as necessary, which the Board would review at a study session and approve at a subsequent Board meeting. Depending on the scope of the policy changes or additions, CEQA analysis may be required to support Board adoption.

Timeline:

- February 2020 – May 2020
- Board Study Session of proposed policy language: March – April 2020
- Board approval of new policy language: May – June 2020

Attachments:

- September 12, 2018 Memorandum: Agricultural Policy Project - Process and Schedule
- Agricultural Policy Development Timeline



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: September 12, 2018

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *den*

FROM: Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager  
Brian Malone, Acting Assistant General Manager

SUBJECT: Agricultural Policy Project - Process and Schedule

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## SUMMARY

This memorandum provides the Board of Directors (Board) with a defined process and schedule to update the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) agricultural policies, which is a Fiscal Year 2018-19 Action Plan project. To ensure that policy development is well informed, the process includes four major phases of work, including two workshops, one study session, and one public hearing. The work would begin in November, with the hiring of the new Natural Resources Specialist/Rangeland Ecologist, and continue through October 2019. To maintain momentum and allocate the resources necessary to host multiple workshops (important new scope), three operational projects would be deferred or have the schedule extended. Moreover, updates made to the District's agricultural policies will serve to inform the subsequent work for two of these projects.

## BACKGROUND

Clarifying and further defining and the District's role in agricultural preservation, consistent with the San Mateo Coastal Service Plan, is a component of the work program for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The proposed project scope of work includes compiling and reviewing existing agricultural policies, guidelines, and current practices. This step is particularly important since Board-adopted agricultural policies exist in numerous documents (Basic Policy, Resource Management Policies, Coastal Service Plan, etc.) with the potential for inconsistencies and/or conflicts. This work will also evaluate gaps and areas requiring greater clarification, such as understanding the District's role in the provision of Agricultural Workforce Housing. The goal is to arrive at a comprehensive Board-approved agricultural policy to inform future work.

The updated Agricultural Policy may include or touch on the following topics:

- Agricultural production plans
- Agricultural workforce housing
- Agricultural infrastructure
- Water supply and use
- Pesticide use
- Predation and pest management

- Brush management
- Balance with resource protection
- Invasive species management
- Compatible public access
- Riparian and aquatic habitat protection
- Marketing and promotion
- Use of conservation easements and fee title
- Types of uses permitted (e.g. grazing, row crops, small livestock and poultry, greenhouses, processing plants, cannabis, vineyards, tree farms, horse breeding, dairy, native plant harvesting, orchards, apiaries, farm dinners, tours, environmental education etc.)

Some topics are addressed in sufficient detail within existing policies. Other topics would benefit from additional policy development to better define Board direction and the District's role. In the course of evaluating all of the facets that apply to agricultural preservation, the Board may request the inclusion of additional topics.

As a reminder, the mission for the Coastal Protection Area (established in the 2004 Coastal Annexation Area Service Plan) is as follows (**bold** denotes additions to the District's basic Mission Statement):

“To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land **and agricultural land of regional significance**, protect and restore the natural environment, **preserve rural character**, **encourage viable agricultural use of land resources**, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. **The District will accomplish this mission as a cooperative endeavor with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals with similar goals.**”

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH AND TIMELINE

To best provide the Board with a full understanding of the elements of an agricultural policy, the General Manager is preparing to pursue a phased approach starting with a review of all pertinent District policies, guidelines, and practices as follows:

### *1) Review Existing Agricultural Policies, Guidelines, and Practices*

The San Mateo Coastal Area Service Plan and subsequent EIR establishes the policies, guidelines, and practices by which the District purchases and manages lands in the San Mateo County coastside area, including agricultural lands. The Basic Policy, Resource Management Policies, property management policies, and various other board and administrative policies provide staff direction on agricultural uses, leases, and easements. A review of these and other existing agricultural policies will establish a good framework from which to move onto the next phase of policy development -- to host an agricultural workshop of the San Mateo Coast.

#### Timeline:

- November 2018 – December 2018
- Board Study Session: January 2018

#### Potential Attendees:

- Grazing/row crop/chestnut farm/tree farm tenants
- Other interested members of the public

Desired Outcomes:

- Understand current agricultural goals, vision, expectations, emphasis, gaps, inconsistencies, and conflicts on District lands
- Inform the Board about the acreage and types of agricultural uses on District lands
- Understand natural resource management policies, guidelines, and practices that support and affect agricultural uses
- Receive early Board feedback on topics and gaps to address as part of this agricultural policy work

2) *San Mateo Coast Agricultural Workshop*

Supervisor Don Horsley of San Mateo County is a local leader in agricultural preservation, and has modeled an engagement strategy with the coastside community through hosting agricultural workshops in 2012 (San Mateo County Agricultural Summit on November 29) and 2014 (Water Supply Reliability on December 5). There may be an opportunity to co-host an Agricultural Workshop with San Mateo County to understand the priority issues and concerns of a wide breadth of local agricultural producers to receive the full range of viewpoints (conventional, organic, grazing, row crops, tree farms, vineyards, etc.). Topics may include farm labor housing, infrastructure, predation, public access, and water use. If time allows, the workshop may include site tour(s) of working lands.

## Timeline:

- Preparation: January 2019 - March 2019
- Workshop: March 2019

Potential Attendees:

- Grazing/row crop/chestnut farm/tree farm tenants
- Conventional farmers/ranchers
- Organic farmers/ranchers
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- San Mateo County Farm Bureau
- San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner

Desired Outcomes:

- Identify main issues facing agricultural producers on the San Mateo Coast and Peninsula, from conventional to organic
- Understand the benefits and challenges agricultural producers face with the programs and practices offered or required by the District and other partners, agencies, non-profits
- Strengthen connections between the District and local agricultural producers
- Identify desired elements for the agricultural policy

3) *Partner Agency Workshop*

Following the Agricultural Workshop, the District would hold a focused workshop with partner agencies and organizations to discuss their roles and responsibilities in helping to preserve and sustain agriculture. As part of this workshop, the Board would gain insights in the current programs offered and practices implemented by partner agencies; the successes, challenges, and lessons learned using case studies; and the gaps or deficiencies that are present within the District's jurisdiction where the District may consider playing a greater role. Topics may include the balance of natural resources protection with sustainable agriculture; land management costs

and benefits; public outreach and education; and the management of conventional and organic practices on protected open space lands. If time allows, the workshop may include site tour(s) of partner-managed working lands.

Timeline:

- Preparation: April 2019 – June 2019
- Workshop: June 2019

Potential Attendees:

- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- Coastside Land Trust
- TomKat Ranch Education Foundation
- San Mateo County Planning - Local Coastal Program
- Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- Santa Lucia Conservancy
- Pepperwood Foundation
- Sonoma Mountain Institute
- California State Parks

Desired Outcomes:

- Share best practices and lessons learned
- Strengthen connections with partners and organizations that support agriculture
- Identify programs and practices that are most beneficial to agricultural producers and protective of natural resource values
- Identify desired elements for the agricultural policy

4) *District Agricultural Policy, Guidelines, Practices:*

Information, feedback, and Board direction received at each workshop would be used to either update existing policies, guidelines and practices, or develop a new comprehensive set of policies as necessary, which the Board would review at a study session and approve at a subsequent Board meeting.

Timeline:

- July 2019 – October 2019
- Board Study Session of proposed new policy language: September 2019
- Board approval of new policy language: October 2019

## ADJUSTMENTS TO FY2018-19 OPERATING PROJECTS

To accomplish the agricultural policy update as detailed in this memo and accommodate the expanded project scope, adjustments to the following three operating projects for FY2018-19 are necessary. Moreover, updates made to the District's agricultural policies will inform the work of the first two listed items below.

| Project                             |          | Notes  | Department          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|--|---------------------|
| Evaluate District's Role in Offsite | Deferral | Updates to the agricultural policy will inform the | Land and Facilities |

|  |                       |  |                   |
|--|-----------------------|--|-------------------|
| Agricultural Workforce Housing           |                       | District's role in supporting offsite agricultural workforce housing.                            |                   |
| Basic Policy Update for the Coastal Area | Deferral              | Updates to the agricultural policy will inform updates to the Basic Policy for the Coastal Area. | Planning          |
| Prescribed Fire Program Development      | Extension of Schedule | Depending on staff capacity, the project schedule may need to be extended.                       | Natural Resources |

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# Agricultural Policy Development Timeline

