



VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT • FALL 2025



Midpen Photo Contest Winners Announced

This acorn woodpecker photo taken by Audrey Choi in a Midpen preserve was one of more than 150 images submitted. See the winning entries at openspace.org/photo-contest.

Collaborative Efforts for a Comeback

How Midpen is Partnering to Save an Endangered Snake

The San Francisco garter snake can be found only in San Mateo County — and nowhere else on earth. These striking and elusive reptiles are severely threatened by many factors, including habitat loss and fragmentation, drought, disease, vehicle strikes, declining prey populations, low genetic diversity, competition from and predation by invasive species and illegal poaching.

These threats are nothing new. In fact, the San Francisco garter snake was first listed as endangered in 1967 on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's very first endangered species list. Yet, despite decades of special protection, the snake's survival remains precarious.

To thrive, the snakes require a specific and diverse blend of habitats: large, intact coastal grasslands and a mosaic of year-round ponds and seasonal wetlands. Just as importantly, this exceptional endemic species needs a diverse coalition of partners working together toward its recovery.

That's why Midpen has joined forces with the National Park Service's Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, U.S. Geological Survey and San Francisco Zoo to collaboratively develop a population enhancement plan.

In the spring of 2025, project partners collected 11 pregnant female snakes from a population on the San Mateo

County coast. These snakes were transported to the San Francisco Zoo where they are currently under special care. Unlike many other snake species, garter snakes don't lay eggs. Instead, their eggs develop internally, and the snakes give birth to live young. These mothers are expected to give birth in late summer or early fall 2025 and will be returned home once their offspring are born.

The project team is hopeful for a strong outcome, with early ultrasounds showing that the goal of 80-120 live snakes being born is feasible. Once the young snakes have grown large enough to survive in the wild, one third will be released to the site where the mother snakes were originally collected.

The remaining two-thirds will be released at other known San Francisco garter snake population sites in dire need of additional snakes to diversify and bolster the gene pool. Each baby snake will be genetically tested to ensure that there is a good mix of genes going to each population.

While many open spaces theoretically offer the right conditions for San Francisco garter snakes, only a handful of confirmed populations exist — many of which are genetically isolated, with dwindling numbers. For the species to be removed from the endangered

species list, there must be at least 10 viable, self-sustaining breeding populations, each with over 200 individuals.

“This beautiful snake truly is on the brink of extinction, and we're acting as their life support.”

—Midpen reptile biologist Ariel Starr

“The need to protect and support the San Francisco garter snake was recognized before the Endangered Species Act even existed, and fortunately, it is not too late for them,” said Midpen biologist Ariel Starr. “Our extensive efforts will help ensure that the people of the Bay Area will have a chance to admire this snake for generations to come.”

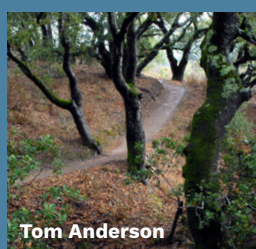
Through continued collaboration, habitat restoration, and science-driven actions like this head-starting program, Midpen and our partners are giving the San Francisco garter snake a fighting chance. The clock is ticking — but with a shared vision and forward-looking action, there's hope for a comeback.

[Learn more at openspace.org/SFGS](https://openspace.org/SFGS).



San Fransisco garter snake (Midpen)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Protecting Oak Woodlands

New research will guide Midpen in enhancing several species of oak trees in Long Ridge Preserve.



New Coastal Land Purchase

Further connecting existing preserves to protect wildlife, plants and critical habitats.



Free Docent Guided Activities

Midpen docent naturalists share their passion for nature with free activities this fall.

Growing the Future of Conservation



There's a quiet kind of magic on the trail—the hush of fog, the wide-open sky and deep redwood shade, the sound of birdsong and

sense of restoration. Trails can fill our souls, offer us adventure, ground and heal us.

Trails are also a labor of love. Behind and beyond each project are the people who build and maintain these physical connections to the natural world. During the summer, Midpen's open space technicians and maintenance teams are bolstered by seasonal crews who help repair bridges and culverts, clear downed trees, handle erosion control and assist in wildfire resiliency. They come from all walks of life and share a passion for the outdoors and a commitment to Midpen's mission to uphold these special open spaces, protect and restore the natural environment and provide for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment.

In June, Midpen's board approved a new partnership agreement with the San Jose Conservation Corps and Charter School (SJCC), which provides participants with opportunities to learn technical and life skills while working on natural resource management projects. Over the years, it's been



Midpen also works with the San Francisco Conservation Corps, shown here at work on a shaded fuel break for fire safety at La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. (Frances Freyberg)

a successful partnership, with many SJCC crew members transitioning into Midpen's seasonal technician positions. The seasonal approach is a symbiotic relationship, with the seasonals bringing new vitality and energy to Midpen, and experienced staff sharing their expertise and skills. It also has become a critical pathway for the development of new conservation and land stewards.

With over 250 miles of trail for the public to enjoy, Midpen recently established a division dedicated to land stewardship and trails with Michael Gorman as its first manager. Michael began his Midpen journey as a seasonal open space technician and still recalls the joy of visiting a completed work site and hearing the appreciation of visitors on a job well done.

It is through the seasonal technicians, partnerships with SJCC and a similar partnership with the Student Conservation Association, and our robust internship program that we can continue to grow the future of environmental stewardship and deliver on Midpen's mission and the promise of Measure AA, a 30-year bond to deliver community-supported projects in Midpen's Vision Plan.

I am grateful to all the seasonals and staff who make these trails possible. The joy we feel while on these paths is a testament to their craft, care and commitment. May we continue to lift up and grow these careers so we can all enjoy our natural open spaces provided for the community by the community.

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Midpen helps plants, animals and people thrive throughout the greater Santa Cruz Mountains region by preserving a connected greenbelt of more than 70,000 acres of public open space. Midpen is a public agency created in 1972 by a grassroots voter initiative to protect the green spaces in parts of Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. We manage 27 open space preserves with more than 250 miles of trails for you to explore, free of charge, all year long.

Our Mission: To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Our mission on the San Mateo County Coast: 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.

BOARD MEETINGS

Are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 p.m. in-person and via Zoom. For details visit openspace.org/board-meetings.

Ana María Ruiz, General Manager
Leigh Ann Gessner, Open Space Views Editor
Katie Renz, Guided Activities Editor

Giving Oak Trees Room to Breathe

Midpen Kicks-Off New Forest Health Project

Across several sites in Midpen's Long Ridge Open Space Preserve, dense stands of Douglas fir trees are shading out what were once vibrant oak woodland habitats. In response, Midpen is kicking off a multi-year restoration project that will give oaks the room and resources they need to grow and reestablish their woodland habitats in select parts of the preserve, contributing to greater biodiversity and improved drought and fire resilience in the region.



Sensors on 60 oak trees are measuring light, humidity, temperature and tree growth. (Midpen staff)

Though they are native to California, Douglas firs were historically limited by fire on the landscape, as they lack the natural fire resilience that oaks and other fire-adapted species possess. However, due to decades of fire suppression across the state and the absence of prescribed and cultural fires, Douglas firs have been able to grow unchecked, expanding their range and crowding out oak woodland and grassland habitats.

“By giving oak woodlands room to breathe, we will improve the overall health of the landscape,” said Sophie Christel, who works in Midpen's natural resources department. “A more balanced mix of oak woodlands and conifer forests will increase biodiversity and water availability while reducing fire severity in the area. The hope is that in the future, the landscape will be healthy enough with sufficient understory clearance and tree separation to enable the use of prescribed fire as a land management strategy as well.”

To begin the project, Midpen has installed sensors on sixty oaks throughout the project area and is teaming up with the University of San Francisco to analyze environmental



Midpen is supporting habitat for California's iconic native oaks, like this one, in Long Ridge Open Space Preserve. (Frances Freyberg)

data before and after the restoration work takes place. These sensors are sophisticated data collectors, measuring several factors including light availability, humidity, temperature and even the degree to which the tree leans. Most importantly, the tags measure growth on both very short and longer timescales. The tags reveal tiny expansions and contractions of the trunk over minutes and days as the trees respire, taking in water through their roots, transporting it through the trunk to the leaves, and releasing it during photosynthesis.

“We can see the trees ‘breathe’ as they go through these daily cycles, and it helps us understand how much water is available in the soil,” says Christel. Examining the data over months and years shows longer-term growth.

Together, the short-term and long-term data provide crucial information on how environmental factors like seasonal water availability, slope, and temperature affect tree growth.

These tags will collect data for several years before any restoration work takes place and will continue to monitor the environment afterward. The hope is to see signs of the oaks’ recovery following the restoration – with increased growth after the rainy season, a spreading canopy that takes advantage of the newfound sunlight and overall greater water availability.

Learn more about Midpen's work to improve climate change resilience at openspace.org/climate.

High-Tech Cowbells

Pilot Project Tests Benefits of GPS for Conservation Grazing

Tracking via GPS is everywhere these days, from providing driving directions to location sharing and trail navigation. Recently, the academic and agricultural communities have been testing this commonly used technology on cattle as a potential new tool for managing livestock grazing more efficiently and effectively, including as part of a new pilot project within Midpen's conservation grazing program.

“We are testing the efficacy of this tool for providing better grazing, fuels and carbon management as it is beginning to be adopted by ranchers,” said Tracy Shane, State Extension Livestock Specialist with the University of Nevada at Reno.

Shane's research team is providing one year of funding for a pilot project in partnership with Midpen conservation grazing tenant Willow Creek Land and Cattle to collar one of their herds that graze in Midpen's La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. The project is also partially funded by the nonprofit Nevada Agricultural Foundation.

The Red Barn area of the preserve maintains its historic agricultural use as a working ranch with Willow Creek Land and Cattle tenants currently managing a herd of 60 female cows.

Their cows each recently received a GPS device that fits like a traditional cowbell, which the cattle are used to, and is designed to break away if needed. The University of Nevada researchers have fitted the GPS collar devices onto hundreds of cattle as part of their wider study.

The devices track the cattle's locations every 30 minutes, allowing ranchers to know where their cattle are on the landscape at all times. Another benefit the devices could provide is fewer fences on the landscape. Similar to virtual fencing used by some dog owners, the cattle GPS collars can be used with virtual fencing to more precisely manage where cattle are grazing and keep them out of sensitive areas, such as creek corridors, ponds and restoration areas without the need for physical fencing.



The conservation grazing tenant used the corrals near the Red Barn area of La Honda Creek Preserve to gather their herd and put GPS devices on the mother cows. (Leigh Ann Gessner/Midpen)



The conservation grazing tenant returns the cow-calf herd to their grazing area in La Honda Creek Preserve after putting GPS devices on the mother cows. (Leigh Ann Gessner/Midpen)

“We're in a data revolution when it comes to livestock, it's pretty exciting,” Shane said. “A lot of agencies are looking into using GPS and it takes enterprising, innovative forerunners getting some experience to make that change.”

Learn more about Midpen's work in the San Mateo County coast at openspace.org/Coastside.

“We are testing the efficacy of this tool for providing better grazing, fuels and carbon management.”

—Tracy Shane, State Extension Livestock Specialist, University of Nevada at Reno

New Coastal Property Helps Connect the Greenbelt

Purchase Protects Badgers, Grasslands and Redwoods

Many of the land purchases Midpen makes today in the highly populated and developed region tie back to the first phrase of our mission: Protecting and connecting a regional greenbelt.

The recent purchase of a nearly 275-acre property a few miles west of Skyline Boulevard, in the hills above the town of La Honda, fills in a gap in the greenbelt ringing the Bay Area.

Midpen was able to make the purchase using funds from Measure AA, a bond passed by local voters in 2014 specifically to support open space projects in Midpen's Vision Plan, including preservation of the upper San Gregorio Watershed.

The property includes two intermittent streams within the headwaters of the watershed that provide excellent potential habitat for some of our region's most iconic rare species: the threatened California red-legged frog and the endangered San Francisco garter snake.

The property's grasslands, which the previous owner grazed with cattle, are prime habitat for American badgers – a species of special concern that Midpen has been studying in nearby preserves. Badgers are wide-ranging and need protected and connected patches of grassland away from development and roadways for burrowing and hunting. The property also includes 44 acres of second-growth redwood forest, now protected in perpetuity.

Given the land's prior grazing history, Midpen is evaluating the potential of adding the property to its conservation grazing program and determining what new or improved grazing infrastructure would need to be put in place to ensure cattle do not wander onto surrounding private property or sensitive preserve areas.

Learn more about Midpen's work on the coast at openspace.org/Coastside.



Wildlife such as American badgers benefit from this new land addition to Midpen's Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve. (Vishal Subramanian)

The newly purchased property expands the physical connection between Midpen's existing Russian Ridge and Skyline Ridge open space preserves.



Fall 2025 Docent Naturalist Guided Activities

Caitlin Dempsey Morais

Are you ready to explore and enjoy the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves? We invite you to discover these extraordinary places that include many thousands of acres of permanently protected open space, from redwood forest to bay shoreline. All guided activities are developed and provided by docent naturalists who have completed an extensive training program. These docents volunteer their time to enrich your experiences and share knowledge with you about natural and cultural history.

To pique your interest, take a look here at the list of guided activities and then refer to our website [openspace.org/guided-activities](https://www.openspace.org/guided-activities) for all additional needed details. The activities are FREE and only some require reservations. Please note that some preserves have more than one access point and some activities meet at a preserve or location other than where the guided activity will occur. If there is no special “where to meet” information then the activity meets at the preserve’s main parking area. For accessibility inquiries, reach out to adacoordinator@openspace.org or by phone at (650) 691-1200 or by dialing the California Relay Service at 711.

September

Explorer Hike: Skyline to Sempervirens
Wednesday, September 3
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
Meet: Saratoga Gap Vista Point Parking Area
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Biodiversity Week: Hands-On at Horseshoe Lake
Saturday, September 6
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Meet: Skyline Ridge Equestrian Parking Area
3 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

Vultures: Nature’s Unsung Heroes
Saturday, September 6
9 a.m. – Noon
La Honda Creek Preserve
1.5 miles [E](#)

Earthquakes & Walnut Trees
Sunday, September 7
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Full Moonrise from Borel Hill
Sunday, September 7
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
4 miles [R](#) [S](#) [L](#)

Late Afternoon Ridge Hike
Monday, September 8
3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike
Wednesday, September 10
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve
Meet: Purisima Creek Road Parking Area
6 miles [R](#) [S](#) [L](#)

Oak Academy
Saturday, September 13
9 a.m. – Noon
Teague Hill Preserve
Meet: Redwood Roadside Parking
4 miles [R](#) [M](#)

Arachnophilia!
Saturday, September 13
5:45 – 11 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [R](#) [M](#)

Framing the Foothills
Sunday, September 14
9 a.m. – Noon
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [M](#)

Life Within the Marshes
Sunday, September 14
10 a.m. – Noon
Ravenswood Preserve
2.5 miles [E](#) [F](#) [W](#)

Sentinel in the Sky
Sunday, September 14
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit Parking Area
0.25 mile [M](#)

Windy Hill Serendipity
Tuesday, September 16
9:30 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Mindful Movement in Nature
Tuesday, September 16
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [L](#)

Explorer Hike: Lichens 101
Wednesday, September 17
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
4.75 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Ride the Views from Gap to Gully
Saturday, September 20
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
Meet: Saratoga Gap Vista Point Parking Area
13.5 miles [R](#) [A](#)

Black Mountain
Saturday, September 20
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4.5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Cloverdale Ranch: Midpen’s Newest Preserve
Saturday, September 20
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Cloverdale Ranch Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
4 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

Family Nature Journaling
Sunday, September 21
10 – 11 a.m.
Ravenswood Preserve
0.5 mile [E](#) [F](#) [W](#)

Equinox at Turtle Rock
Monday, September 22
4 – 7:30 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
Meet: Hickory Oaks Roadside Parking
4.5 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

Morning Meander: Orchard to Creek
Wednesday, September 24
9 – 11 a.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
2 miles [E](#)

Don’t Look Up
Wednesday, September 24
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
Meet: Saratoga Gap Vista Point Parking Area
4.25 miles [M](#)

Trail Trek Thursday
Thursday, September 25
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
7.5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Signs of Fall
Friday, September 26
9 a.m. – Noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#)

Redwoods & Logging
Saturday, September 27
8:30 a.m. – Noon
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
4 miles [S](#)

Wildcard Ramble at Rancho
Monday, September 29
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
7 miles [S](#) [L](#)

October

Berries & Oak Galls
Wednesday, October 1
10 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Explorer Hike: Bayside Birding
Wednesday, October 1
10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Ravenswood Preserve
3 miles [E](#) [L](#) [W](#)

Earthquake Trivia
Sunday, October 5
2 – 4:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike
Wednesday, October 8
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Limekiln Trailhead
5 miles [S](#)

Wandering Among the Hawthorns Area
Thursday, October 9
10 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
2 miles [R](#) [M](#)

Oak Academy
Saturday, October 11
9 a.m. – Noon
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Meet: Skyline Ridge Equestrian Parking Area
4 miles [M](#)



Roberta Cavazos

Wonders of Cherry Springs
Sunday, October 12
9:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
2.5 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

Wildland Knowledge of Native Peoples
Monday, October 13
9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Autumn’s Inspiring Qigong
Tuesday, October 14
1:30 – 4 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2.5 miles [M](#)

Explorer Hike: Fall Along the Fault
Wednesday, October 15
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Fall Frolic with a View
Friday, October 17
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
7.5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

The Spirit of Methuselah
Friday, October 17
9:30 a.m. – Noon
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
2.75 miles [M](#)

Ride the Views from Gap to Gully
Saturday, October 18
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
Meet: Saratoga Gap Vista Point Parking Area
13.5 miles [R](#) [A](#)

Oaks Will Surprise and Sustain You
Saturday, October 18
2 – 5 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)



Ken Miller

Sentinel in the Sky
Sunday, October 19
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit Parking Area
0.25 mile [M](#)

Fall Changes in Rancho Hike
Tuesday, October 21
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
6 miles [S](#)

Mindful Movement in Nature
Tuesday, October 21
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [L](#)

Morning Meander: Autumn Habitats
Wednesday, October 22
9 – 11 a.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Signs of Fall
Friday, October 24
9 a.m. – Noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#)

Scenic Amble Between Lake and Pond
Friday, October 24
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Vistas & Vaqueros
Saturday, October 25
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
Meet: Mindego Gateway Parking Area
5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Autumn on the Trail
Saturday, October 25
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
3 miles [E](#) [F](#) [L](#)

Cloverdale Ranch: Midpen’s Newest Preserve
Saturday, October 25
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Cloverdale Ranch Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
4 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

History on Two Wheels
Sunday, October 26
8:45 – 11:30 a.m.
Fremont Older Preserve
11 miles [R](#) [L](#) [B](#)

Ramble at Rancho
Monday, October 27
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
7 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Trail Trek Thursday
Thursday, October 30
9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
Meet: Allen Road Permit Parking Area
5 miles [R](#) [S](#)

November
The Raven at Windy Hill
Saturday, November 1
8:30 – 11 a.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles [M](#)

Waterwheel Downhill Ride
Saturday, November 1
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve parking Area
17 miles [R](#) [L](#) [A](#)

Legend

[E](#) **Easy Hike/Walk:** Flat to gently rolling hills. Total elevation gain less than 200 feet. Leisurely pace. Frequent stops. Usually less than 3 miles.

[M](#) **Moderate Hike:** Steeper or more frequent uphill grades. Total elevation gain 200 to 600 feet. Leisurely to moderate pace. Usually between 3 and 5 miles.

[S](#) **Strenuous Hike:** Steep hills and/or long distances. Total elevation gain greater than 600 feet. Moderate to vigorous pace. Usually more than 5 miles.

[A](#) **Advanced Mountain Bike Ride:** Intended for participants with dirt single-track riding experience; competent at climbing and descending steep and rough trails. Moderate to fast pace, 10+ mile ride on a wide variety of trail conditions. For experienced riders with a high level of physical fitness and excellent endurance.

[B](#) **Bike Intermediate:** Intended for participants with dirt single-track riding experience; able to climb and descend steep and moderately rough trails. Recreational ride at a moderate/brisk pace; 8+ miles on a wide range of fire roads and single-track trails. For experienced riders in very good physical condition with good endurance.

[L](#) **Meal/Snack Break:** Bring a lunch, dinner or snack as appropriate.

[F](#) **Family Friendly:** Suitable for children; must be accompanied and supervised by an adult. See the activity description for any additional information.

[W](#) **Wheelchair Accessible**

[R](#) **Online Reservations Required:** [openspace.org/guided-activities](https://www.openspace.org/guided-activities) will accept reservations two weeks in advance of an activity date and allow a maximum of four people per reservation. No walk-up participation allowed. Please cancel your reservation if you can no longer attend.

Earthquake Walk
Sunday, November 2
1 – 3:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Explorer Hike: Up Above
Wednesday, November 5
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
Meet: Allen Road Permit Parking Area
5 miles [R](#) [S](#) [L](#)

Supermoon on Black Mountain
Wednesday, November 5
3:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
5 miles [R](#) [S](#) [L](#)



John Kesselring

Oak Academy
Friday, November 7
9 a.m. – Noon
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
3.5 miles [M](#)

Cool Season Qigong
Friday, November 7
1 – 4 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3 miles [M](#)

Ride the Views from Gap to Gully
Saturday, November 8
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
Meet: Saratoga Gap Vista Point Parking Area
13.5 miles [R](#) [A](#)

Trees of Fall
Saturday, November 8
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2.5 miles [E](#) [F](#) [L](#)

Ferns & Other Ancient Plants
Saturday, November 8
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Sentinel in the Sky: Veteran’s Day
Sunday, November 9
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit Parking Area
0.25 mile [M](#)

Ramble at Rancho to Duveneck
Monday, November 10
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
9 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Preparing for Winter
Tuesday, November 11
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Meet: Russian Ridge Parking Area
2 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike
Wednesday, November 12
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
5 miles [S](#)

Ranchlands to Woodlands
Thursday, November 13
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
7.5 miles [R](#) [S](#) [L](#)

Now Be Thankful
Friday, November 14
8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
7.5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Footsteps Through Time
Friday, November 14
9 a.m. – Noon
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
3.5 miles [M](#)

Cloverdale Ranch: Midpen’s Newest Preserve
Saturday, November 15
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Cloverdale Ranch Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
4 miles [R](#) [M](#) [L](#)

An Afternoon Search for Seeds and Fruits
Saturday, November 15
1 – 4 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

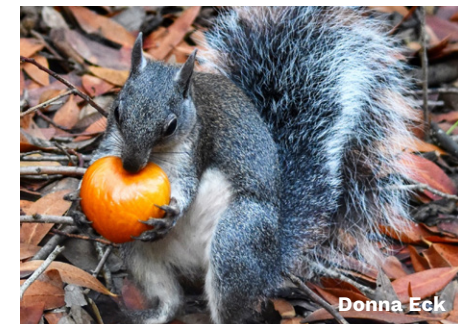
To the Summit!
Sunday, November 16
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
7.5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

Don’t Look Up
Monday, November 17
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
5.5 miles [S](#)

Mindful Movement in Nature
Tuesday, November 18
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [L](#)

Explorer Hike: Annual Turkey Trot
Wednesday, November 19
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Signs of Fall
Wednesday, November 19
1 – 4 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#)



Donna Eck

Trail Trek Thursday
Thursday, November 20
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
Meet: Mindego Gateway Parking Area
5 miles [S](#) [L](#)

A Bench with a View
Friday, November 21
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Manzanita Morning Hike
Sunday, November 23
9 a.m. – Noon
St. Joseph’s Hill Preserve
3.5 miles [M](#)

Trees & Friends
Monday, November 24
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
5.5 miles [S](#)

Morning Meander: Meadow to Farm
Wednesday, November 26
9 – 11:30 a.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
2 miles [E](#)

Opt Outside Sensory Celebration
Friday, November 28
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Picnic Tables Roadside Parking
5.5 miles [M](#)



**Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District**
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, California 94022
650-691-1200
info@openspace.org
openspace.org



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New Season, New Possibilities!

**Applications for Midpen’s Grantmaking Program
are opening this Fall 2025, inviting organizations to
apply for funding to support projects that enhance
environmental understanding and protection.**

**Whether you’re advancing scientific research,
expanding partnerships with fellow environmental
organizations, or educating the next generation
of stewards, this is your chance to turn vision
into impact.**

Stay informed at openspace.org/grants.



Frances Freyberg



Student Conservation Association

Hands-On Learning in Open Space

Partnership Highlights Conservation Career Paths for Youth

Recently, the open spaces became an outdoor classroom and career exploration site for young adults as they embarked on a transformative, two-week long program hosted by the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and supported by Midpen. Over the course of the two weeks, the young conservationists dug into hands-on projects that both benefitted local ecosystems and sparked their interest in ecological careers.

The Community Crews program, a paid opportunity hosted by SCA and funded by various partners, gives high school and college-aged students the chance to immerse themselves in hands-on, nature-based work while addressing economic and accessibility barriers. By providing stipends, transportation to preserves, mentorship and educational talks, SCA

opens the doors to environmental careers for youth who might otherwise have no other introductory pathways to this field of work.

They learned how to remove invasive yellow star thistle from the land, clear culverts and use hand tools to maintain trails. Midpen has collaborated with the SCA before, including a successful one-week-long pilot in 2024 that took place at the El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve. The students worked side-by-side with Midpen staff across several Midpen preserves, including Los Trancos, Monte Bello and Russian Ridge.

The Community Crews program is about more than just technical skills, it offers students a glimpse into the many ways they can have a public service role in the

conservation of open spaces. Midpen staff from a variety of disciplines — from land stewardship to wildlife biology to rangers — took time to share their personal stories with the students, showing how they came to work in open space management.

“Just like the natural environment survives and thrives in a diverse setting, we really believe in having the folks who are utilizing and managing these spaces reflect the diversity in our communities.”

—SCA Bay Area Director Kate Casale

Though not initially drawn to the outdoors, Zach—a youth member of SCA’s community crew—described how the experience surprised him.

“My experience with SCA has been extremely diverse and really unique. I’ve never really been outdoorsy, but [this program] has opened my mind to a lot of things.”

By the end of the program, the participants walked away with valuable skills, fresh perspectives and a renewed sense of possibility in the world of environmental work.

“These types of partnerships are really important to us, because young people get to not only have a hands-on work experience, they also get to learn directly from professionals and see the different and varied career paths that are available to them,” said Casale.

Learn more at openspace.org/partnerships.

A Modern Treasure Hunt

Recently, students from the Boys & Girls Club of the Coastside combined smartphones and open space for a GPS-powered geocaching event hosted by Midpen at Los Trancos Open Space Preserve. This hands-on outing marked another chapter in a growing partnership between the Boys and Girls Club and Midpen.

Participants use smartphones to locate hidden containers, or “caches,” throughout the landscape.

For many of the Boys and Girls Club participants, this event was their first introduction to their local open space preserves.

Midpen’s 25 publicly accessible preserves feature more than 300 hidden geocaches.

Learn more at openspace.org/geocaching.



Ryan McCauley