



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Work on the San Mateo County Coast

Introduction

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is a public agency created by voters in 1972; the result of a grassroots effort by local citizens who wanted to preserve "room to breathe" after seeing the Santa Clara Valley filled in by development.

Decades later, as development pressure threatened the San Mateo County coast's scenic beauty, rural character and agricultural heritage, residents expressed their support for extending Midpen's boundaries to include the coastal area.

In 2004, Midpen's boundaries expanded to include the San Mateo County coast. The area is called Midpen's Coastside Protection Area and has a unique mission statement associated with it that includes agriculture.



COASTSIDE MISSION

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.



To date, Midpen has **protected more than 19,000 acres of natural and agricultural lands** on the San Mateo County coast that contribute to the area's rural identity, natural beauty, quality of life and agricultural heritage. Of these lands,

- More than **15,000 acres leased to ranching tenants** under Midpen's Conservation Grazing Program.
- Midpen has **protected more than one-third of the remaining ranchlands** on the San Mateo County coast.

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How Midpen Works on the Coastside

Midpen's **Coastside Protection Area Service Plan**, developed in collaboration with Coastside residents and the agricultural community, guides our work in the region. Through the plan, Midpen is committed to:

- Protecting watershed integrity and water quality.
- Protecting the natural environment, including sensitive habitats for rare plants and wildlife.
- Preserving existing and potential farming and grazing operations to keep the maximum amount of prime agricultural land and other lands suitable for agriculture in production as local food sources.
- Protecting the rural and agricultural heritage of the San Mateo County coast.
- Linking public open spaces and park lands for habitat and trail connectivity.
- Providing opportunities for low-intensity recreation and supporting an integrated regional trail system.
- Providing opportunities for scientific research, resource conservation demonstration projects, outdoor environmental education programs and interpretive programs for the public.



Investing in the Coastside

Local voters, including Coastsiders, passed Midpen's Measure AA in 2014. This 30-year, \$300 million bond supports open space projects in Midpen's community-supported Vision Plan, including dozens of Coastside preservation, restoration and public access projects. Coastside property tax-payers contribute to Measure AA. Midpen's remaining funding comes from a small share of property tax on ridgeline and bayside properties within our service area.

To date, more than **\$16 million in Measure AA funding has been invested in Coastside open space and agriculture projects**. These include land preservation, habitat restoration, watershed protection, conservation grazing and ecologically sensitive public access projects at Purisima Creek Redwoods, La Honda Creek, Miramontes Ridge, Tunitas Creek and Cloverdale Ranch preserves.

Midpen Agriculture and Ranching Investments, 2009-2025

Total: \$3.81 million

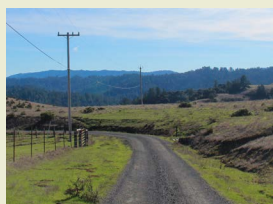
Brush
\$779,180



Fences
\$1,657,300



Road/Trail
\$134,500



Structure
\$774,740



Water
\$444,719



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Conservation Grazing and Agriculture

Midpen's Agricultural Policy, which was updated in 2023 through a public process, defines Midpen's role in agriculture on the San Mateo County coast in alignment with our mission.

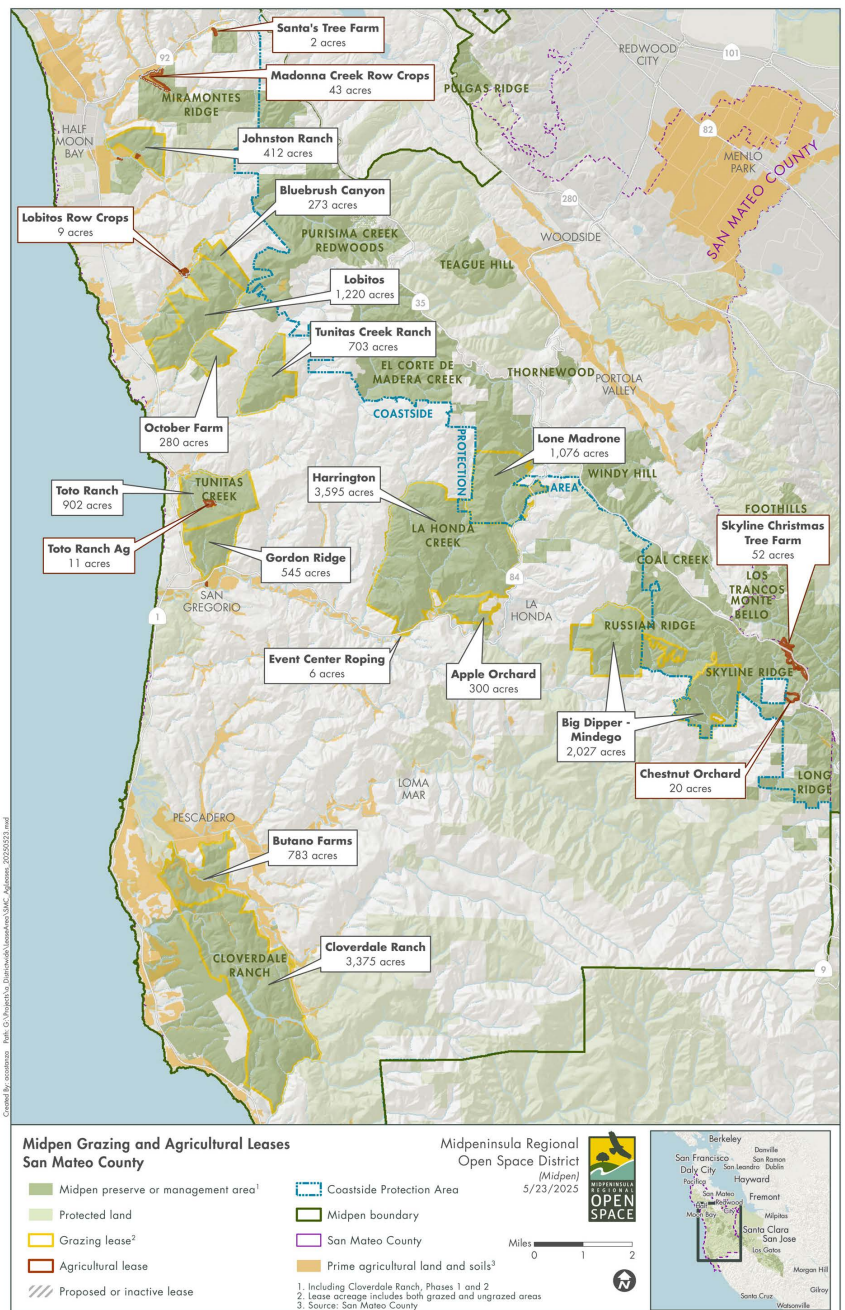
Midpen's Conservation Grazing Program is a collaboration with small-scale, local ranchers accomplishing multiple goals that align with our coastal mission, including

- Maintaining and restoring coastal grasslands and their unique biodiversity
- Managing vegetation to reduce wildland fire risk
- Supporting agriculture on the San Mateo County Coast

There are also some row crops within Midpen's coastal-area preserves, including seven acres of cut flowers in Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve, 33 acres of produce in Miramontes Ridge Preserve and a historic chestnut orchard and Christmas tree farm in Skyline Ridge Preserve.



Cloverdale Ranch corral replacement: before (top), and after (below).



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Agreements With South Coast Schools and Fire

As a tax-exempt public agency, Midpen does not pay property tax. However, since expanding to the Coastside in 2004, Midpen has had an agreement in place to provide the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District and San Mateo County fire services with property tax compensation payments to keep their funding whole when Midpen protects open space land within their jurisdictions.

Partnerships

Midpen works in partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust, San Mateo Resource Conservation District and others to balance viable agricultural and open space conservation goals on the San Mateo County coast.



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