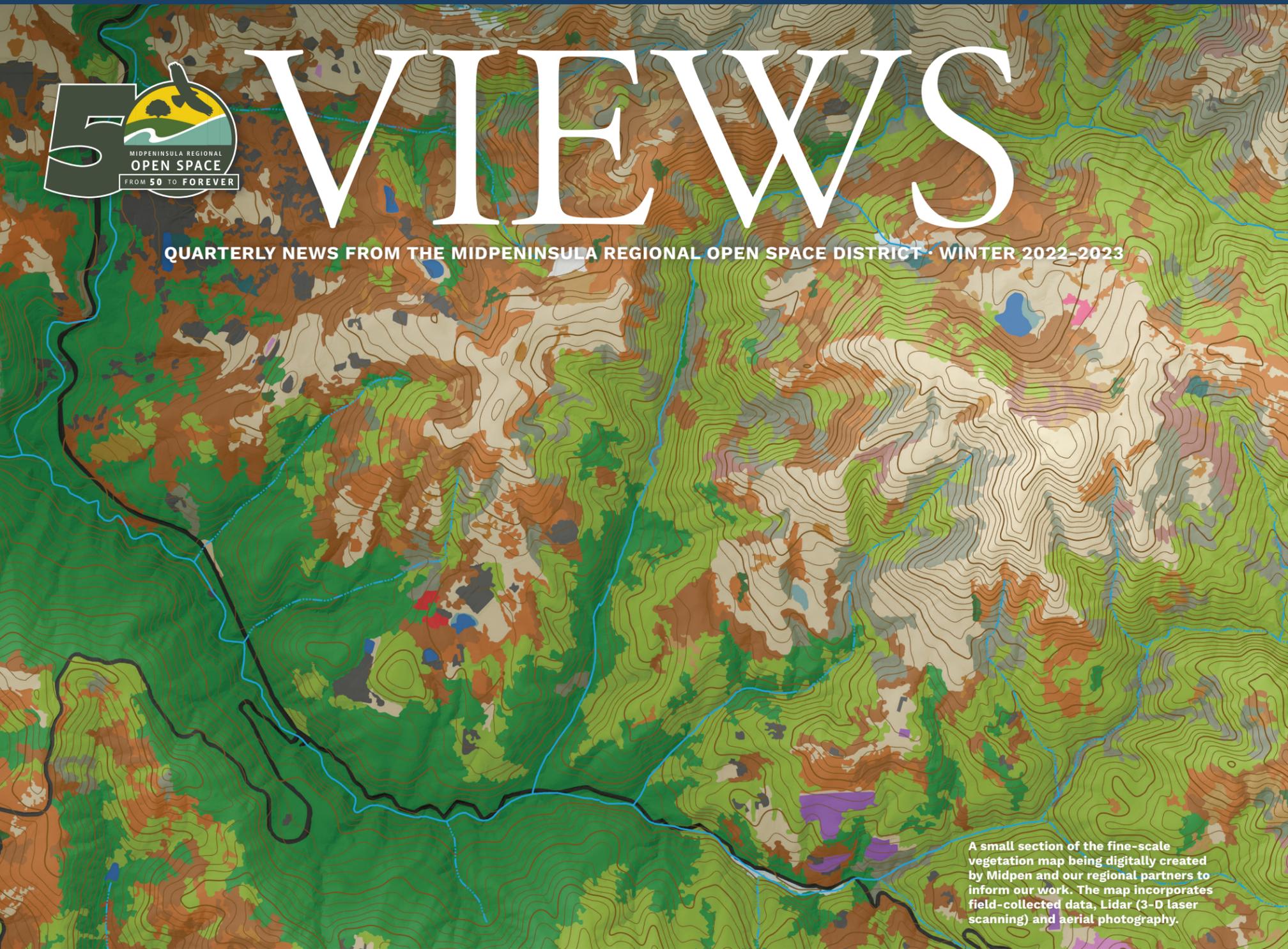




# VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT · WINTER 2022-2023



A small section of the fine-scale vegetation map being digitally created by Midpen and our regional partners to inform our work. The map incorporates field-collected data, Lidar (3-D laser scanning) and aerial photography.

## Open Space Tech

Using digital tools to help plants, animals and people

Rapidly advancing technology may seem to be at odds with open space preservation, however, new technologies such as digital mapping, apps, cameras and software are essential to Midpen’s work. These tools help us understand and adapt to an ever-changing world, care for the natural environment and support the public in learning about and visiting the preserves.

### Restoring Native Plant Communities

Together with dozens of partner organizations, staff is working to create a publicly accessible, fine-scale vegetation map of San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties that will show precise information about plant communities. This map is actually a complex set of data compiled using computer-based machine learning that incorporates field-collected data, Lidar (3-D laser scanning) and aerial photography. This thorough data is foundational to Midpen’s Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, allowing staff

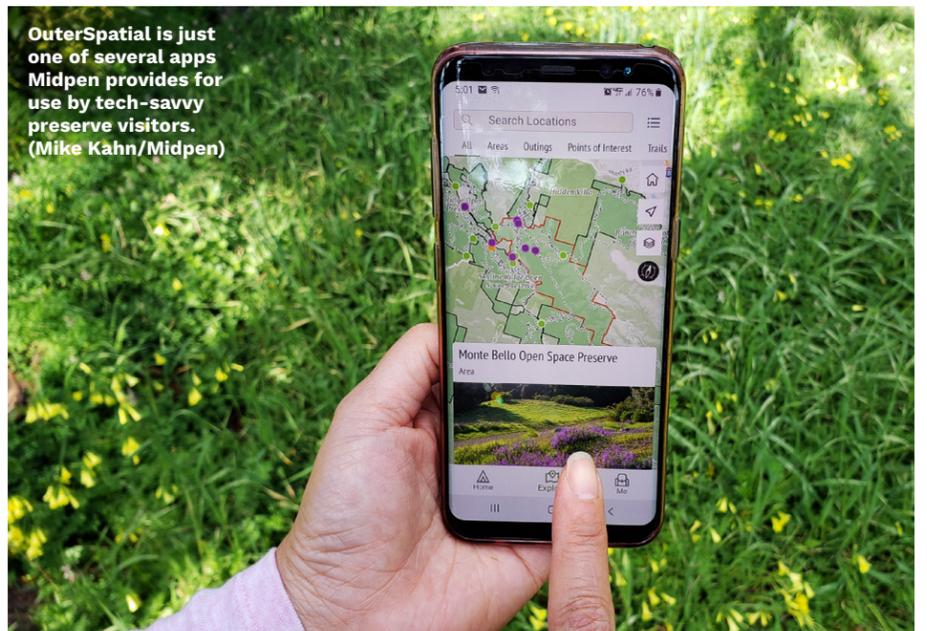
to identify areas with high fuel loads, invasive species, defensible space needs and other fire risk factors, and therefore prioritize areas for ecologically sensitive vegetation management.

### Protecting Wildlife

Midpen wildlife biologists use the fine-scale vegetation map to model and protect suitable habitat for dozens of sensitive wildlife species. Acoustic recording technology and specialized software that identifies species’ wingbeats and calls assist staff in our work with rare bats and endangered marbled murrelets, a seabird that nests in old-growth trees.

Through a partnership with the Santa Cruz Puma Project, mountain lions are fitted with temporary GPS tracking collars to help us understand how to best manage preserves for both wildlife and people. And specialized wildlife cameras are making amazing discoveries of the rare species in Midpen preserves, including most recently the presence of Santa Cruz kangaroo rats and purple martins in Sierra Azul Preserve. Both

OuterSpatial is just one of several apps Midpen provides for use by tech-savvy preserve visitors. (Mike Kahn/Midpen)



species were not known to still be present in Santa Clara County, and Midpen is now working to support their populations.

### Enhancing Public Enjoyment and Education

Along with GeoPDF maps that can be printed or downloaded on smart devices from openspace.org to help visitors plan their trip to a preserve, Midpen OuterSpatial outings can be enjoyed

online at home, or on your mobile device as a self-guided interpretive activity at a dozen Midpen locations. The Midpen 3D app allows you to explore Midpen’s 250 miles of trail in three-dimensional detail, including allowed uses, distances, steepness, elevation profiles, and geographic features.

Access apps, maps and data that can enhance your knowledge and preserve experiences at [openspace.org/tech](https://openspace.org/tech).

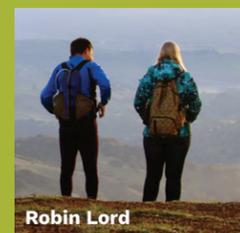
## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



**Backpacking at Midpen**  
Discover Black Mountain backpack camp, open to all for adventure year-round.



**Coastside Conservation**  
Participate in active preservation, agricultural and public access projects.



**Free Guided Nature Activities**  
Midpen docent naturalists share their passion for nature with diverse activities throughout the winter.

# Winter 2022 Guided Activities

## Docent Naturalist-Guided Activities

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 lot.

## December

### All Preserves Great & Small: La Honda Creek

Friday, December 2  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

La Honda Creek Preserve  
Meet: Directions emailed  
3 miles **M** **R**

### Wonders of Cherry Springs

Saturday, December 3  
9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Sierra Azul Preserve  
Meet: Directions emailed  
2.5 miles **M** **R**

### Ferns & Other Ancient Plants

Saturday, December 3  
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Monte Bello Preserve  
3.5 miles **M** **L**

### Following in Ohlone Footsteps

Sunday, December 4  
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Skyline Ridge Preserve  
8 miles **S** **L**

### Explore Early Winter

Sunday, December 4  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Long Ridge Preserve  
4.5 miles **M** **L**

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, December 4  
1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **E**

### Fleas Navidad Dog Hike

Tuesday, December 6  
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
3 miles **M** **D** **R**

### Edge to Edge

Wednesday, December 7  
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Long Ridge Preserve  
Meet: Hickory Oaks trailhead  
5 miles **M** **L**



Joan Sparks

### Explorer Hike: Wintertime Traditions

Wednesday, December 7  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Long Ridge Preserve  
4.5 miles **M** **L**

### Winter Birding at the Bay

Saturday, December 10  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Area  
3 miles **E** **L**

### All Preserves Great & Small: Series Finale

Monday, December 12  
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Rancho San Antonio Preserve  
5.5 miles **M** **R**

### Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, December 14  
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

St. Joseph's Hill Preserve  
Meet: Little League field parking lot  
6 miles **S** **L**

### Water Wonders

Friday, December 16  
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Monte Bello Preserve  
4 miles **M**

### King Tides Walk

Friday, December 23  
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Ravenswood Preserve  
3 miles **E** **W**

### Escape the Holiday Madness!

Saturday, December 24  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Picchetti Ranch Preserve  
4 miles **M** **L**

### A Road Less Traveled

Sunday, December 25  
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Skyline Ridge Preserve  
Meet: Russian Ridge  
4 miles **M** **F** **L**

### Morning Meander: Marshland to Bay

Wednesday, December 28  
9 – 11 a.m.

Ravenswood Preserve  
2.4 miles **E**

## January

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, January 1  
1 – 3:30 p.m.

Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **M**

### Explorer Hike: Winter Waterfowl

Wednesday, January 4  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Area  
4 miles **E** **F** **L**

### Amazing Banana Slugs!

Saturday, January 7  
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
Meet: Purisima Creek Road entrance  
2 miles **E** **F** **R**

### Fremont Older History Ride

Saturday, January 7  
9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Fremont Older Preserve  
11 miles **B** **L**

### Winter Birding at the Bay

Saturday, January 7  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Area  
3 miles **E** **F**

### Fungal Fun

Sunday, January 8  
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
7 miles **S** **L**

### Skyline Serendipity

Tuesday, January 10  
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Skyline Ridge Preserve  
Meet: Russian Ridge  
3.5 miles **M**

## 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**D** Dogs: All dogs must be on a leash and well-behaved and socialized. Please bring water for your dog and be prepared to carry out dog waste.

**R** Online Reservations Required: [openspace.org/guided-activities](https://www.openspace.org/guided-activities) website 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.

### Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, January 11

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Rancho San Antonio Preserve  
5 miles **M**

### Above the San Andreas

Thursday, January 12  
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Monte Bello Preserve  
Meet: Picchetti Ranch  
3 miles **M**

### Searching for Slugs & More

Saturday, January 14  
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve  
Meet: Skeggs Point parking area  
3.5 miles **M** **L**

### Explorer Hike: Stroll to Stevens Creek

Wednesday, January 18  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Picchetti Ranch Preserve  
4 miles **M** **L**

### High Tide at Ravenswood

Saturday, January 21

10:15 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Ravenswood Preserve  
0.5 miles **E** **W**

### King Tides Walk

Sunday, January 22

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Area  
3 miles **E**

### Signs of Winter

Tuesday, January 24

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
4.2 miles **M**

### Morning Meander: Salt Marsh to Bay

Wednesday, January 25  
9 – 11 a.m.

Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Area  
2 miles **E**

### Scenic Skyline Sampler

Sunday, January 29

9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Skyline Ridge Preserve  
8 miles **S** **L**

## February

### Explorer Hike: Wildflower Treasure Hunt

Wednesday, February 1

10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Thornewood Preserve  
4 miles **M** **L** **R**

### Wonders of Cherry Springs

Saturday, February 4

9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Sierra Azul Preserve  
Meet: Directions emailed  
2.5 miles **M** **L** **R**

### Earthquake Walk

Sunday, February 5

1:30 – 4 p.m.

Los Trancos Preserve  
2 miles **M** **F**

### Finding Connections

Wednesday, February 8

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Long Ridge Preserve  
Meet: Highway 9 – Sempervirens Vista  
4 miles **M**

### Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, February 8

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Picchetti Ranch Preserve  
5 miles **M**

### A Walk in the Garden

Thursday, February 9

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Windy Hill Preserve  
Meet: Skyline Boulevard parking area  
3.5 miles **M** **R**

### Mountain Meadow Meander

Friday, February 10

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Rancho San Antonio Preserve  
Meet: Directions emailed  
2.5 miles **E** **M** **R**



Stephan Morris

### Fungal Fun

Sunday, February 12

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
7 miles **S** **L**

### Signs of Early Spring

Wednesday, February 15

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
4.2 miles **M**

### Explorer Hike: Lichens 101

Wednesday, February 15

10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Long Ridge Preserve  
4.8 miles **M** **L**

### Redwoods: Heroes of the Forest

Saturday, February 18

1 – 4 p.m.

Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve  
4.5 miles **M** **F**

### Morning Meander: Up for Flowers!

Wednesday, February 22

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Pulgas Ridge Preserve  
2.5 miles **M**

### Flowers: Not Just a Pretty Face!

Saturday, February 25

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Skyline Ridge Preserve  
Meet: Russian Ridge  
2 miles **E** **F**

### Natural & Human History

Tuesday, February 28

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve  
Meet: Purisima Creek Road entrance  
5.5 miles **M** **L** **R**

## Reflecting on a Year of Celebration



Ana María Ruiz

All year long, we have been celebrating 50 years of caring for the land that cares for us and many of you have participated along the way. Thank you for your enthusiastic support!

Midpen was founded by community members just like you who saw the need to protect the nature that coexists around us. With your support, we have protected more than 65,000 acres, stretching east to the Bay and west to the Pacific, to create an interconnected greenbelt where people, plants and animals can thrive.

Last spring, founder Nonette Hanko was honored as a Bay Nature Institute Conservation Hero for her tireless work to preserve open space, as a former elected Midpen board director for 46 years and as a key force in creating the Peninsula Open Space Trust (a nonprofit, private land trust and Midpen conservation partner) and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, our sister public agency to the south.

In April 2022, more than 800 people came out to the Bayside Family Festival at Ravenswood Open Space Preserve in East Palo Alto to learn more about Midpen and our work. In September 2022, nearly 1,200 attended the Coastside Community Celebration at Johnston Ranch in Half Moon Bay.

**While our anniversary year may be coming to a close, our cause for celebration continues.**



Young audience members join local band Hands on Fire! onstage during the Bayside Family Festival April 30 in Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. (Leo Leung for Midpen)

Throughout the year, you joined us on docent-led hikes, like our All Preserves Great & Small series, and online for fun contests and challenges and our 50 Open Stories celebrating extraordinary individuals just like you who appreciate and understand the value and benefits of open space for all.

In December, the board will consider approving the purchase of 5,100 acres of Cloverdale Ranch, located at the southern end of the Coastside town of Pescadero, forming our 27th open space preserve — a fitting capstone to 50 years of conservation and an enduring indication of what we can accomplish when we come together as a community to envision the future.

See event photos, a visual timeline of Midpen's history and more from our 50th anniversary celebrations at [openspace.org/50](https://openspace.org/50).

### 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 65,000 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 26 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](https://openspace.org/board-meetings).

Ana María Ruiz, General Manager  
Leigh Ann Gessner, Open Space Views Editor  
Ellen Tjosvold, Guided Activities Editor



The iconic red barn in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve with a dusting of snow. (Randy Miller)

## Repairing the Red Barn

Coastal projects support preservation, agriculture and access

The iconic red barn in Midpen's La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve, as seen from Highway 84, serves as a visual gateway to the rural San Mateo County Coastside. Over the past couple of months, it has been under construction, receiving a new roof that will help the 120-year-old historic structure continue withstanding the elements, including better protection from potential fires. Midpen has maintained the barn since acquiring the property, conducting a major restoration effort in 2002 and periodically applying fresh coats of red paint.

The barn was originally built around 1900 by the Weeks family for housing ranch animals and storing equipment and hay. Today, the red barn visually preserves the Coastside's deep agricultural roots and rural heritage for residents and visitors—cattle still graze the surrounding pasture as part of Midpen's conservation grazing program and our ranching tenants use the barn for storage—all in alignment with the agricultural aspects of our coastal mission.

The barn is also important to Midpen's work in protecting and restoring the natural environment, as the only known



A Townsend's big-eared bat roosting in a structure on a Midpen preserve. (Matt Sharp Chaney/Midpen)

location in all of Midpen's lands and throughout the San Francisco Peninsula where rare pallid bats successfully raise their young each year.

This California species of special concern group together in a maternity roost, giving birth to their pups in the barn's safe and warm environment where they are cared for until they learn to fly and hunt alongside their mothers by late summer. Pallid bats are unique for their ability to hunt prey (including scorpions!) from the ground, making them partial to open grassland environments like those surrounding the red barn.

**“Bats are an essential part of a healthy ecosystem. They help regulate insect populations, including agricultural pests. According to Bat Conservation International, the annual insect control bats provide is worth an estimated \$23 billion to U.S. agriculture. They are a natural insecticide.”**

—Midpen biologist Matt Sharp Chaney

Help shape Midpen's work on the San Mateo County Coastside by participating in upcoming public meetings for several projects. Details can be found at [openspace.org](https://openspace.org).

### Proposed Cloverdale Purchase

This winter, Midpen's board is considering approving the proposed purchase of approximately 5,100 acres of a property near Pescadero known as Cloverdale Ranch from our partners at Peninsula Open Space Trust. Given its size and location, this purchase would establish a new Midpen preserve rich in ecological and agricultural resources. [openspace.org/Cloverdale](https://openspace.org/Cloverdale)

### Agricultural Policy Update

Through a public process, staff is updating Midpen's agricultural policy that guides our role in regional agriculture on the San Mateo County Coastside. [openspace.org/ag-policy](https://openspace.org/ag-policy)



California red-legged frogs are found in water-rich areas of Cloverdale Ranch. (Midpen)

### La Honda Creek Preserve Public Access Study

Recently, Midpen board members and constituents from throughout Midpen's service area came together to participate in the La Honda Public Access Working Group to identify the best ways for expanding public access into the central area of La Honda Creek Preserve. Their resulting suite of recommendations have been evaluated, including with technical studies, and staff will be sharing their findings publicly this winter before moving to the next step of drawing up design plans for possible new public access facilities. [openspace.org/LHC-access](https://openspace.org/LHC-access)



La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve's newest trail, the Grasshopper Loop, reopens to dogs on-leash December 15 when calving season ends for the conservation grazing tenant. (Eleanor Raab/Midpen)



**Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District**

5050 El Camino Real  
Los Altos, California 94022-1404  
Phone: 650-691-1200  
info@openspace.org  
openspace.org

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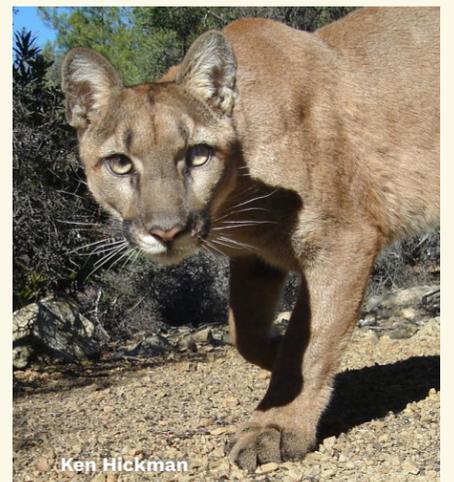
Sign up to receive Midpen's monthly e-newsletter and updates on preserves and projects. [openspace.org/opt-in](https://openspace.org/opt-in)

Follow us on social media:



## New Documentary is a Journey Through Time and Midpen Preserves

As a capstone to our yearlong 50th anniversary celebrations, Midpen is bringing our stories to you in a new documentary airing December 24 at 4 p.m. and December 25 at 10 p.m. on NBC Bay Area. From the comfort of your home, we'll take you on an hour-long journey back into local history, out on the trails, up to the mountaintops and into the secret lives of local charismatic wildlife found in Midpen preserves. Grab some popcorn and get ready to be inspired!



Ken Hickman



### OPEN STORIES

## Bob Garcia: Midpen's First Ranger

Bob Garcia was studying biology at San Jose State University in 1975 when he got the call from staff at Midpen, then a newly created public agency, in need of someone to help build out the ranger program and get eyes and ears on the ground in the first open space preserves. At the time, the agency was still known as the Midpeninsula Regional Parks District. When Garcia joined, there were fewer than 10 total employees.

Garcia most often patrolled the newly acquired lands on the lookout for trespassers, whether they be illegally camping or riding motorcycles through the protected open space lands. While his main focus was to patrol, he also performed maintenance duties. In those very early days, he was missing much of the necessary equipment, such as a two-way radio, a standardized uniform with a badge, and an all-terrain vehicle capable of traversing dirt roads.



Mercury News

"Some of my favorite memories are of doing the simple things like selecting the first Midpen ranger uniforms and ordering a patrol vehicle," Garcia explained. "The first Midpen vehicle wasn't 'The Thing' [pictured at left], it was actually my personal Volkswagen bug."

What Midpen may not have had in terms of equipment and supplies, was more than made up for with tenacity and dedication.

"We all had a shared common vision," Garcia recounted. "What Midpen is today, and what it has become, is far beyond what I could have imagined at the time."

Now retired, Garcia still actively

spends time outdoors in Midpen preserves, including riding his horse through Thornewood Open Space Preserve.

Read more profiles about people who love open space at [openspace.org/open-stories](https://openspace.org/open-stories).



Mercury News

Participants on a recent overnight beginners trip to the Black Mountain backpacking camp in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve by Midpen partner organization Latino Outdoors.



## Outdoors for All

It's not every day in the Bay Area that you can enjoy a vivid sunset followed by the moonrise from a mountaintop. Midpen's one-and-only backpacking camp atop Black Mountain in Monte Bello Open Space Preserve above Palo Alto makes those experiences accessible to anyone willing and able to hike a couple of miles. For some, this site also provides an opportunity to learn how to backpack, which is camping on foot carrying everything you need in a pack.

On a recent weekend, more than a dozen people participated in a beginner-friendly backpacking trip to Black Mountain. They hiked a couple of miles each day, with our partner, Latino Outdoors, providing all the gear and food for the excursion. The hike leaders taught basic backpacking skills and shared information about local wildlife, trees and plants along the way.

For experienced backpackers looking for more local trips, Midpen's Black

**"It was an awesome weekend spent playing games, building community and experiencing the outdoors together," said Latino Outdoors San Francisco Bay Area Regional Coordinator Aurora Perez.**

Mountain backpack camp can serve as the first stop on longer trips utilizing our trail network to reach other established backpacking camps in neighboring state parks, providing even more close-to-home opportunities for skygazing, connecting with nature and building community.

Learn more and make a reservation at Midpen's Black Mountain backpack camp online at [openspace.org/camping](https://openspace.org/camping).