



VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT · FALL 2022



Upper Lake at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve opened to the public with an easy-access trail around its perimeter in 2019. It was once part of the adjacent former Alma College site, which will open to the public later this fall. Photo by Eric Finley.

Revealing the Past

New Area Highlighting Cultural History Opening this Fall in Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

Like all Midpen public lands, Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve has a long history of natural and human-led alterations. The landscape in this much-visited preserve, which opened to the public for the first time in 2019, has been shaped by earthquakes and forest streams, and also by many people including Native Californians, gold rush-era migrants, loggers, wealthy estate owners and even Jesuits who operated Alma College on the site from 1934 to 1969.

At this site, elements from each chapter of the preserve's human history are being protected within a restored natural setting to provide history and habitat all in one. The project team is refurbishing certain Alma College structures, using reclaimed original redwood lumber salvaged from other dilapidated, and now removed, structures on the site. Original bricks were also salvaged and repurposed to recreate some of the terraced steps, and the architectural facade of an

Midpen staff are hard at work preparing to share the stories and relics of Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve's rich cultural history with the public later this fall, when we open a new, rehabilitated area to the public that we call the Alma College cultural landscape.

original library. The historic human activity on the property and its extensive development first as an estate and then as a Jesuit College resulted in the loss of native habitats and damage to the natural ecosystems. Seeking to restore the natural habitat values of the land, the project used native species in the landscapes to mimic the shape and feel of former nonnative historic plantings



Midpen staff and consultants working to rehabilitate the site and install interpretive signs that tell the land's cultural history. Photo by Renée Fitzsimons/Midpen.

that were intentionally added to the property by previous landowners to establish elaborate gardens.

"Significant remediation efforts are necessary for public safety before opening the area to access," said Midpen Senior Capital Project Manager Scott Reeves. "We have worked with care and intention to rehabilitate several buildings from the historic estate and Jesuit period, which help tell the land's story."

When the area opens later this fall, visitors will be able to walk through the landscape, view a 1909 chapel and 1934 library from the outside (there will not be public access inside the buildings), as well as learn where other original buildings once stood. Interpretive signage throughout the site will tell the natural and cultural history dating back thousands of years.

Sign up to receive updates on when the site will open at openspace.org/alma.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Conservation and Agriculture
Our work on the Coastside protects open space, restores nature and supports local agriculture.



Reintroducing Prescribed Fire
Midpen is building out the details of our plans for 2023 and hosting upcoming public meetings.



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



Fall 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 autumn’s guided activities and then refer to our website openspace.org/guided-activities for additional 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 shown then the activity meets at the preserve’s main parking lot.

September

Earthquake Walk

Sunday, September 4
1 – 4 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles [E](#)

Explorer Hike: Lichens 101

Wednesday, September 7
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

All Preserves Great & Small: Tunitas Creek

Thursday, September 8
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Tunitas Creek Preserve
Where to Meet: Directions emailed
2 miles [M](#) [R](#)



Elizabeth Yicheng-Shen

East of the Sun & West of the Moon

Friday, September 9
5 – 10:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
5 miles [M](#) [L](#) [R](#)

Morning Meander: Orchard to Creek

Wednesday, September 14
9 – 11 a.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
2 miles [E](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, September 14
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#)

All Preserves Great & Small: Long Ridge

Sunday, September 18
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
5 miles [M](#)

Ferns and Other Ancient Plants

Sunday, September 18
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Farewell to Summer

Wednesday, September 21
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve
Where to Meet: Purisima Creek
Road entrance
7 miles [S](#) [L](#) [R](#)

Signs of Fall

Wednesday, September 21
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4.2 miles [M](#)

Explorer Hike: Monte Bello Meander

Wednesday, September 21
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

October

Fremont Older History Ride

Saturday, October 1
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Fremont Older Preserve
11 miles [B](#) [R](#)

Earthquake Walk

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

Explorer Hike: Early Fall Landscapes

Wednesday, October 5
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Where to Meet: Skyline Boulevard
parking area
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)



Karl Gohl

End of Season

The last weekend that the Daniels Nature Center will be open for the season is November 19–20. Plan on visiting next year when the center reopens in April 2023!

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 - 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.
- H** Equestrian Ride: Equestrians must provide their own horses (no stallions). Riders under age 18 must wear a helmet. Lead lines are required and breast collars are recommended for horses.
- 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 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.

All Preserves Great & Small: Skyline Ridge

Friday, October 7
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Where to Meet: Russian Ridge
5 miles [M](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, October 12
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
5 miles [M](#)

Autumn at Long Ridge

Thursday, October 13
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Literature, Lore and Life Sciences

Saturday, October 15
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Where to Meet: Equestrian parking lot
5 miles [M](#)

Nature Journaling

Saturday, October 15
2 – 4 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Russian Ridge
0.5 miles [E](#) [F](#)

All Preserves Great & Small: Windy Hill

Sunday, October 16
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Where to Meet: Skyline Boulevard
parking area
5 miles [M](#)

Explorer Hike: Fall Along the Fault

Wednesday, October 19
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Ohlone Medicine

Saturday, October 22
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Nature at Night

Saturday, October 22
4:30 – 10:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#) [R](#)

A Sense of Community

Tuesday, October 25
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4.2 miles [M](#)

Pond to Pond

Saturday, October 29
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Where to Meet: Equestrian parking lot
4.5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

November

Explorer Hike: Redwood Autumn

Wednesday, November 2
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

All Preserves Great & Small: Saratoga Gap

Friday, November 4
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Saratoga Gap Preserve
5 miles [M](#)

Wildland Knowledge

Saturday, November 5
1 – 4 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
1.2 miles [E](#) [F](#) [W](#)

50th Anniversary Nature Walk

Sunday, November 6
12:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3 miles [M](#) [F](#)

Earthquake Walk

Sunday, November 6
1:30 – 4 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles [E](#) [F](#)

Morning Meander: Grassland to Redwoods

Wednesday, November 9
9 – 11 a.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
Where to Meet: Sears Ranch Road
entrance
2 miles [E](#)

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, November 9
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
5 miles [M](#)

A Seasonal Sense of Place

Thursday, November 10
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

Moving Mountains

Saturday, November 12
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
5 miles [M](#) [L](#)

All Preserves Great & Small: Teague Hill

Sunday, November 13
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Teague Hill Preserve
Where to Meet: Directions emailed
4 miles [M](#) [R](#)

Hiking and Mindfulness

Sunday, November 13
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles [M](#) [L](#)

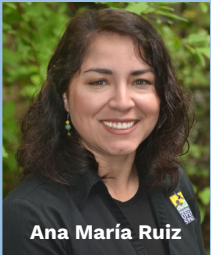
Signs of Fall

Tuesday, November 15
9 a.m. – 12 noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4.2 miles [M](#)

Explorer Hike: Annual Turkey Trot

Wednesday, November 23
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
4 miles [E](#) [L](#)

Conservation-Agriculture Connection on the Coast



The public benefits of conserving land as open space are many: clean air, clean water, biodiversity, climate resiliency and the well-being that comes with spending time in nature.

On the San Mateo County Coast, undeveloped land typically has a long history of agricultural uses and our Coastside mission includes preserving agricultural land, encouraging viable agricultural use of land resources and preserving rural character. This work yields additional, perhaps less obvious benefits.

To date, Midpen has preserved more than 12,000 acres of open space in our Coastside Protection Area. About 75% of that land is leased to small-scale, local ranchers through our conservation grazing program to maintain coastal grasslands, one the most biodiverse and threatened ecosystems in North America. Several endangered, threatened and special-status species, like San Francisco garter snake, badgers, burrowing owls and California red-legged frogs, depend on grassland habitat. As Midpen restores grassland and pond habitats for the benefit of wildlife and to support local agriculture we successfully preserve the ecological function of our coastal lands. Midpen also leases 130 acres to farmers producing various crops and flowers.

Our nonprofit partner, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), plays a complementary role in agricultural conservation, working with farm owners and operators to preserve farmlands and natural resources, protecting our regional agricultural heritage and important open space lands.

Join us in our work balancing preservation, restoration, agriculture and recreation on the Coastsides at upcoming public meetings this fall.

Agricultural Policy Update

We are updating our agricultural policy to clarify Midpen’s role in preserving significant local agricultural lands and encouraging viable agricultural use of land resources. **Learn more and stay informed of public meetings this fall at openspace.org/ag-policy.**

Potential Cloverdale Purchase

Midpen is considering a partial purchase of a property near Pescadero known as Cloverdale from POST. This ecological jewel is one of the largest contiguous open spaces remaining on the Coastside. Its coastal grasslands and abundance of water supports rare, grassland-dependent and aquatic species. With several active farms and active conservation grazing, Cloverdale benefits local people, plants and animals. **Learn more and stay informed of upcoming public meetings this fall at openspace.org/Cloverdale.**



Leigh Ann Gessner/Midpen

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 nearly 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

Board meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 p.m. Please visit openspace.org/board-meetings for details.

Ana María Ruiz, General Manager
Leigh Ann Gessner, Open Space Views Editor
Renée Fitzsimons, Guided Activities Editor

Endangered Marbled Murrelets Return to Purisima

Midpen biologist Karine Tokatlian has spent many pre-dawn hours in Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve forests scanning the skies and straining her ears for the unmistakable cries of marbled murrelets. These endangered seabirds spend most of their life at sea, but fly inland to nest in old-growth trees. Year after year, Tokatlian, along with the help of acoustic monitoring devices, detected little to no activity beyond a few far away, faint calls.

“This year was completely different,” Tokatlian said. “Dozens of detections in numbers not seen since the 1990s indicate that murrelets are nesting in the preserve again. It’s very exciting news. They may have redistributed after 2020 CZU fire.”

It’s critical that preserve visitors pack out all food waste and garbage to prevent attracting ravens, crows and jays that are the primary predators of murrelet eggs and chicks.

Learn more by visiting openspace.org/murrelet.



Midpen has entered into a 4-year contract with the San Jose Conservation Corps to increase capacity as part of the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program. Photo by Mike Kahn/Midpen.

Our Wildland Fire Resiliency Work is Year-Round

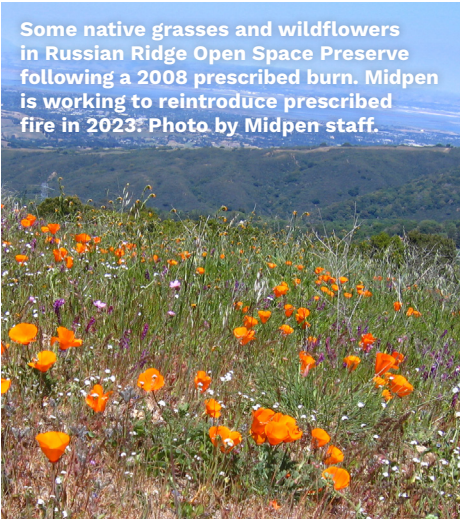
Public Meetings Coming this Fall on Prescribed Fire

Since Midpen’s new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program was approved last year, staff have been working nonstop on increasing our existing and ongoing ecologically sensitive vegetation management projects. At any given time of the year, multiple projects are in-progress throughout Midpen preserves aimed at restoring ecological health and creating landscapes that are resilient to fire, while reducing potential wildland fire severity and helping to protect public safety.

“Fire is a fact of life in California and native plant communities in the Santa Cruz Mountain region have evolved over millennia with fire,” Midpen Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter said. “A changing climate, a long history of intense logging resulting in dense regrowth, coupled with fire suppression, and the fact that people cause the majority of fires in California all contribute to a longer, more intense

fire season. The Wildland Fire Resiliency program is aimed at helping Midpen meet these new challenges.”

More than \$2.5 million in grant funding is supporting this work, along with a new \$750,000 multiyear partnership with the San Jose Conservation Corps.



Some native grasses and wildflowers in Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve following a 2008 prescribed burn. Midpen is working to reintroduce prescribed fire in 2023. Photo by Midpen staff.

The reintroduction of prescribed fire is the last aspect of the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program anticipated to be considered in 2023 as a part of Midpen’s land management toolbox. For thousands of years, local native people, who were the first stewards of these lands, practiced periodic burning to manage the landscape.

“Prescribed fire is an important tool statewide, however, land managers and fire ecologists must implement it tailored to specific locations to maximize benefits,” Sifuentes-Winter said. “Forest management, including decades of prescribed fires near Yosemite National Park are credited with reducing the severity of the recent Oak Fire, and protecting the giant sequoias of the Mariposa Groves.”

Staff are building out the details of Midpen’s prescribed fire program with the support of ecological and fire professionals. This work includes prioritizing areas within Midpen preserves where prescribed fire could be safely and successfully conducted to enhance ecological health and support regional wildland fire safety projects.

Public engagement is a critical component of Midpen’s prescribed fire work. Staff held several in-person and virtual open house events in July 2022, and later this fall, will bring the developing prescribed fire program to public meetings with Midpen’s board of directors.

Sign-up to stay informed of upcoming public meetings on prescribed fire and learn about current and recently completed vegetation management projects at openspace.org/fire.



**Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District**
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, California 94022-1404
Phone: 650-691-1200
info@openspace.org
openspace.org

PRINTED WITH SOY INK PRINTED ON 100% CHLORINE-FREE POST CONSUMER WASTE PAPER

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oakland, CA
Permit #810

Stay Connected to Your Open Space

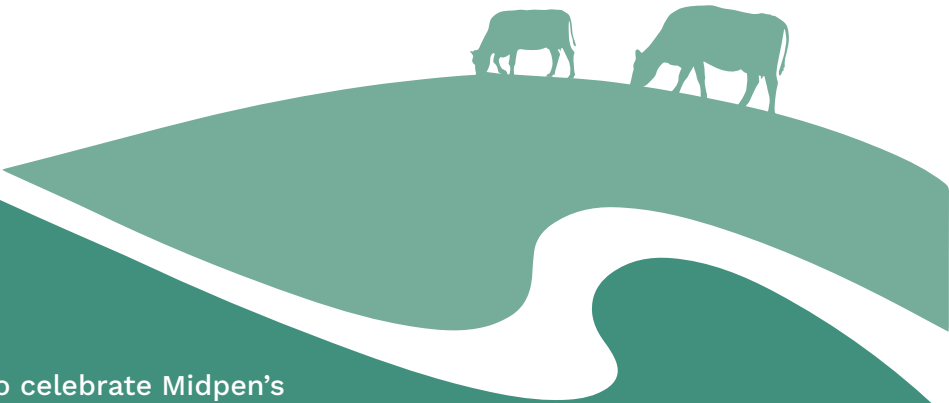
Sign up to receive Midpen’s
monthly e-newsletter and updates
on preserves and projects.
openspace.org/opt-in

Follow us on social media:



Coastside Community Celebration September 10

Join nature lovers of all ages to celebrate Midpen’s
50th anniversary of public open space preservation, protection,
restoration, access and education. This community celebration
will be held at the historic Johnston House in Half Moon Bay
on September 10 from noon to 5 p.m.
Get your free tickets today at openspace.org/50.



School children on a
field trip to a Midpen
preserve courtesy
of Saved by Nature.

New Grant Program Award Winners

Midpen has awarded a second
round of grant funding since
starting the new Grantmaking
Program in 2019. This year, a total
of \$250,000 has been granted to
10 regional nonprofit and research
organizations for projects in support
of Midpen preserves for public access,
interpretation, education and research.

Examples of this year’s projects include
Dominican University’s undergraduate-
led ecological monitoring project
to better understand the effects of

wildfires on terrestrial salamanders,
Coastside Land Trust’s Junior Land
Stewards Program provided at no cost
to fourth grade students, and Saved
by Nature field trips led by naturalist
Richard Tejeda to Midpen preserves
for underserved elementary and high
school students.

“Midpen is fortunate to have the
opportunity to support the incredible
work being done by nonprofit
organizations and researcher partners
in the Bay Area,” said Midpen
Grants Program Manager Deborah
Hirst. “Awardees are contributing
to our regional understanding of
natural resource management and
climate resiliency, creating inclusive
opportunities for field research, and
acting to increase open space access
for all.”

**For more information visit
openspace.org/grants.**

2022 Grantees: Coastside Land
Trust, Saved by Nature, San
Francisco Bay Bird Observatory,
Pie Ranch, Vida Verde Nature
Education, UC Elkus Ranch,
Peninsula Open Space Trust,
Dominican University of California,
Crescent Science and San Jose
State University.



OPEN STORIES Lennie Roberts

One of our most precious natural resources. The sixth supervisor in San Mateo
County. Lennie Roberts has been called many things over her 50+ year career
as an environmental advocate. Most often, perhaps, simply: hero.

In 2009, Lennie was voted the Cox Conserves Hero for the Bay Area; in 2016,
she received the Environmental Hero Award from the Loma Prieta chapter of
the Sierra Club and in 2019 Bay Nature Magazine named her a local hero for
her work to protect open space on the San Mateo County Coastside.

“Her legacy here on the coast is what you don’t see,” Midpen Board President
Zoe Kersteen-Tucker says. “You don’t see thousands of houses sprawling up
the mountainside. What you do see are the beautiful scenic vistas and the
agricultural lands.”

As a volunteer legislative advocate for Green Foothills since 1978, Lennie is
renowned for standing strong on principle while seeking middle ground.

“Lennie has been effective because she is able to identify what’s important,
when to draw a line in the sand, and where to compromise or negotiate,”
retired California Assemblymember Rich Gordon
said when he was a member of the San Mateo
County Board of Supervisors.

Without Lennie’s work, the Coastside would
look very different today: luxury subdivisions,
golf courses, a multilane freeway over Montara
Mountain. Lennie was the author and cosponsor
of Measure A, which voters passed in 1986. This
“Coastal Protection Initiative,” gave 38 policies
in the county’s 1980 Local Coastal Program the
force of law that cannot be changed without voter
approval.

Other achievements Lennie takes pride in are helping to create Midpen in
1972 and expanding its boundaries to San Mateo County in 1976. Green
Foothills was about 10 years old, and Lennie had joined its board of directors
in 1968. She and other Green Foothills leaders led the drive to collect 5,000
signatures to qualify Measure R for the ballot. Voters passed this “Room to
Breathe Initiative” by nearly 68%, establishing Midpen.

Lennie and Green Foothills members were also instrumental in expanding
Midpen’s boundaries to the Coastside in 2004 and helping to pass Measure
AA to fund Midpen’s Vision Plan in 2014. She led advocacy efforts to stop
suburban sprawl on lands that later became Midpen’s Russian Ridge, Purisima
Creek Redwoods and Bear Creek Redwoods public open space preserves.



Lennie Roberts
by Andrea Laue