



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Midpen Open Space urges public to avoid crowding as weather warms

Los Altos, CA — Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District staff are reminding people to follow shelter-at-home directives and practice safe social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from anyone not living in their household as warmer weather brings more people outdoors.

“We expect warmer weather and a holiday weekend will increase the number of people seeking a place to get outdoors,” Midpen General Manager Ana María Ruiz said. “We know that simply being in nature can provide a much-needed respite during challenging times like these, but if we can’t keep our open space preserves safe, we can’t keep them open. We’re urging the public to cooperate and avoid crowding.”

Midpen’s nearly 65,000 acres of public open space spans parts of three counties. In San Mateo County, public health officials have restricted travel for outdoor recreation to within 5 miles from home. Santa Cruz County public health officials have closed all public parks and beaches through at least April 15 due to crowding in recreational spaces, and warns violation is a misdemeanor punishable by citation or arrest with fines of \$1,000 possible.

“Public health officials agree that outdoor activity is essential, and we ask that if you have a backyard or safe neighborhood that you stay close to home and look for nature there,” Ruiz said. “We also recognize not everyone in our community has these opportunities, which is why we’re working hard to keep the preserves open. To do that safely, we need everyone’s help to avoid overcrowding. If the parking lot is full, the preserve trails are full.”

Those not able to perform essential outdoor activities in their own neighborhood are asked to follow these public safety directives when using public areas, such as Midpen preserves:

- **Avoid crowding.** If a parking lot is full, please go home.
- **Maintain 6 feet of distance** from others not in your household. Hike single file, yield to others and only pass when safe to do so.
- **Face coverings** are recommended by public health officials for public places.

Midpen staff are closely following county health directives and are continuing to make changes in operations as needed to comply, including most recently:

- **Temporarily prohibiting bikes and horses** to keep emergency response resources available.
- **Closing Long Ridge and Windy Hill Preserves** at the direction of local authorities.
- **Creating one-way only signage on many loop trails** to facilitate social distancing.

As an independent special district servicing a broad region, Midpen strives to continue serving residents by offering outdoor open space access and recreation; an essential activity listed in county public health orders. For up-to-date information, please visit openspace.org/coronavirus.

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The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land of regional significance in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. On the San Mateo County coast, our mission also includes preserving agricultural land of regional significance and rural character and encouraging viable agricultural use of land resources. Midpen has successfully protected nearly 65,000 acres of public open space land in the Santa Cruz Mountains region since 1972.