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Midpen Open Space celebrates new section of San Francisco Bay Trail connecting communities to nature and enhancing marshland for wildlife

EAST PALO ALTO, Calif. [August 6, 2020] — The newest segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail opens on Friday, August 7 at the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Ravenswood Open Space Preserve near East Palo Alto.

“This small-but-mighty new trail provides a critical missing link in the San Francisco Bay Trail and a vital connection to nature for the community,” Midpen General Manager Ana Ruiz said. “With just a short walk along the trail, you can quickly escape the buildings and traffic and enter a completely different world surrounded by nature, vast open views and the iconic San Francisco Bay. You can get right up to the water’s edge and watch shorebirds take flight, see pickleweed change color with the seasons and enjoy the bay breeze. Bicyclists can now travel along the shoreline for miles, enjoying the Bay Trail for both recreation and as part of their commute.”

The new trail closes a 0.6-mile gap to connect 80 contiguous miles of San Francisco Bay Trail across three counties, from Menlo Park to the north, Santa Clara to the south and across the Dumbarton Bridge path to the East Bay. The Bay Trail is a planned 500-mile walking and cycling path around the entire San Francisco Bay with more than 350 miles completed, connecting communities to parks, open spaces, schools, transit and to each other.

The newly constructed trail segment can be accessed safely from a new sidewalk along University Avenue in East Palo Alto. An easy-access paved pathway, bridge and a raised boardwalk with an overlook and interpretive signs connect to Ravenswood Preserve. Most of the new trail lies within a permanent trail easement granted to Midpen by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

As part of this project, Midpen enhanced the surrounding salt marsh wetlands in Ravenswood Preserve, making the area and its inhabitants more resilient to the effects of climate change. Midpen restored native plant communities and created raised refugia islands providing Cooley Marsh wildlife, including endangered species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse, with safe refuge from high tides and rising sea levels.

To minimize impacts to the complex marshland ecosystem, Midpen designed much of the new trail as an elevated wooden boardwalk extending over the tidal uplands. All construction activities were constrained within

the narrow footprint of the boardwalk and were limited to a five-month window between September and January to avoid the breeding season of the Ridgway's rail, an endangered shorebird.

The total cost for planning, designing, engineering, permitting and building the Ravenswood Bay Trail segment was approximately \$5 million. The project was funded by Measure AA, Midpen's 2014 general obligation bond, with partner support of nearly \$3.5 million in grant funds from the California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Grant, Caltrans, County of San Mateo Measure K, Santa Clara County Measure A, Facebook, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the California Coastal Conservancy.

A free online celebration on Friday, August 7 at 11 a.m. will provide participants with a virtual tour of Midpen's Ravenswood Open Space Preserve, including a behind-the-scenes look at the new trail and enhanced salt marsh habitat benefitting wildlife. For more information about this project and to register to participate in the free online celebration and virtual tour please visit **openspace.org/bay-trail**.

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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.

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