



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Midpen's new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program receives \$1.5 million grant to fund expanded vegetation management work

LOS ALTOS, Calif. [November 19, 2021] — Yesterday, the California Wildlife Conservation Board awarded a \$1.5 million grant to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District for the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Wildland Fire Resiliency Project. The grant will support implementation of Midpen's new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, aimed at assisting ecosystems in becoming healthier and more resilient, reducing wildland fire risk and facilitating fire agency response.

"This program is really a game-changer for us," Midpen General Manager Ana Ruiz said. "It is expanding Midpen's ecologically sensitive vegetation management work by approximately 600% over the next 10 years. We are successfully competing for grants, expanding partnerships and building capacity to pursue this work, which provides significant benefits to our region and increases the resilience of our public open space lands."

Specifically, the new grant will fund vegetation management work for wildland fire and ecosystem resiliency in priority areas on approximately 353 acres in Midpen's Sierra Azul, Long Ridge, Saratoga Gap and Bear Creek Redwoods open space preserves in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. Ecological and archeological surveys of these project sites will ensure environmental protection. The grant leverages Cal Fire funding secured by the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council for the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative Forest Health Grant, of which Midpen is a participant. In addition, the new grant includes major habitat restoration on approximately 10 acres of a former Christmas tree farm.

Earlier this year, the California Coastal Conservancy awarded Midpen a \$400,000 Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program grant to fund vegetation management at priority sites in San Mateo County, including fire-prone invasive acacia removal and restoration at Midpen's Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve.

Wildland fire prevention, preparation and response are central to Midpen's work in managing the public open space land in its care. Staff work year-round maintaining hundreds of miles of fuel breaks and fire roads. Through Midpen's conservation grazing program on the San Mateo County Coast, approximately 6,500 acres are grazed by cattle to help restore native grasslands while reducing fuels for fire safety. Midpen provides annual wildland fire training to staff who are often first responders to fires and assist fire departments, including on the CZU August Lightning Complex Fire, and as ecological advisors. Smoking, campfires and firearms are never allowed in Midpen preserves.

For more information visit [openspace.org/fire](https://www.openspace.org/fire).

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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 more than 65,000 acres of public open space land in the Santa Cruz Mountains region since 1972.

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