



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Midpen's new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program receives \$1.97 million in grants to fund expanded vegetation management work

LOS ALTOS, Calif. [July 15, 2021] — The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has been awarded two grants totaling \$1.97 million to help fund vegetation management projects under its new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, which proactively expands Midpen's ongoing wildland fire prevention, preparation and response work.

The Midpen board of directors approved the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program in May, including certifying the environmental impact report, allowing work to begin.

“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.”

Grants received to date will help fund work in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties:

- **\$400,000 Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Grant from the California Coastal Conservancy** to fund initial implementation of Midpen's new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program vegetation management projects at priority sites in San Mateo County, including fire-prone invasive acacia removal and restoration at Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve.
- **\$1.57 million Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative Forest Health Grant from Cal Fire** to fund vegetation management work for wildland fire and ecosystem resiliency on 354 acres in partnership with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council in Midpen's Bear Creek Redwoods, Saratoga Gap, Sierra Azul and Long Ridge open space preserves. This work includes major habitat restoration on approximately 10 acres of a former tree farm.

Ecological and archeological surveys are in progress at these project sites to ensure environmental protection, and vegetation management work will begin this fall.

Midpen is actively applying for additional grant funding to support its Wildland Fire Resiliency Program which was developed over several years through a public process that included input from local, state, federal and fire agencies; environmental advocacy groups; Native American tribes and community members.

The goals of the program are to assist ecosystems in becoming healthier and more resilient, reduce wildland fire risk and facilitate fire agency response. The program has four components, designed to prioritize potential treatment areas using best available science:

- **Vegetation management plan**
- **Scientific monitoring plan**
- **Pre-fire plans to assist fire agencies**
- **Prescribed fire plan**

The prescribed fire plan component requires further environmental analysis and could tentatively be added to Midpen's land management toolbox in 2023.

Wildland fire prevention, preparation and response are central to Midpen's work in caring for open space land. 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.

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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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