

Public Comments received as of 2:15 PM on February 26, 2020

March 3, Special Meeting

Agenda Item #1

Fiscal Year 2020-21 Capital Improvement and Action Plan Review (R-20-22)



Board of Directors

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President

Walter T. Moore

February 24, 2020

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, CA 94022

Re: Action Plan – Fiscal Year 2020-21

Board of Directors:

On Tuesday, March 3, 2020 the District's Board of Directors will consider new projects to include in the District's action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. As the Board considers priority projects, I want to express POST's appreciation to staff and Board on the District's strong partnership for yet another year in protecting open spaces for public enjoyment and use. We have made impressive progress on shared priorities, and I want to particularly thank the District for your partnership on a broad array of projects to expand opportunities for public access and protect agriculture and wildlife on the San Mateo County Coast including: continued planning and fundraising for the District's acquisition of Cloverdale Ranch; coordination on protection of other coastal ranches and farms; support of POST's Bay-to-Sea Trail vision; and financial support of POST and the County's efforts to expand opportunities for Coastal Access at Tunitas Creek Beach and the Cowell-Purissima Trail. A complete list of ongoing collaborations is attached.

In the coming year, the long-standing, strategic partnership between our organizations will be as important as ever as we work to tackle existing and emerging challenges in our region. Areas of focus and shared priority include expanding opportunities for public access, securing critical wildlife linkages that allow a broad range of species to adapt and thrive under a changing climate, and protection of agriculture (farms and ranches) on the San Mateo County coast. In addition, our marketing team is eager to deepen the relationship with the District's Public Affairs department, to align messages around key projects and amplify stories about our work to protect open space for the benefit of all.

Making progress towards the transfer of Cloverdale Ranch remains a top priority for POST in the year ahead. Over the past year our staff have worked closely on efforts to secure outside funding (including hosting several tours for elected officials and State funding agencies), documenting existing conditions and developing resources and infrastructure on the property, as well as closely coordinating on the initiation of community engagement and outreach to key stakeholders in Pescadero. Ultimately, we are partnering to create a new open space preserve (second only in size to Sierra Azul) to serve community members on the San Mateo Coast and throughout the District's service area.

We are also excited about the abundant opportunities to connect more communities to our lands through the development of regional trails (Purisima-to-the-Sea, Miramontes Ridge, Bay Area Ridge Trail); increased access close to communities in Los Gatos (Bear Creek Redwoods), Pescadero (Cloverdale Ranch and Gordon Ridge), and Half Moon Bay (Johnston Ranch and Tunitas Creek Beach), and through the protection of critical habitat and regionally-significant wildlife linkages.

We appreciate the complexity of the task before staff and the District board in prioritizing allocation of resources among many worthy projects. POST remains excited about partnering with the District on a broad range of priority projects to expand opportunities for public access and protect natural resources, as well as continuing to help the District leverage Measure AA funding on critical projects throughout the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. Daniel Olstein, POST's Director of Land Programs & Stewardship plans to attend the Board's study session on March 3rd and will be happy to answer any questions.

With best regards,



Walter T. Moore
President

Attachment
Collaborative Projects

- Continued exploration of acquisition of Cloverdale Ranch (MAA Project #13);
- Coordination on acquisition of Johnston Ranch uplands, which would allow for new public access opportunities near Half Moon Bay and a trailhead for eventual connection to Miramontes Ridge OSP (MAA Project #1);
- Planning and/or implementation of projects integral to POST's Bay to Sea Trail vision including: Ravenswood Bay Trail connection; Hwy 35 crossing and parking expansion at Purisima Creek Redwoods; initiation of planning for Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail; and additional acquisitions to optimize alignment and access from the Coastside (MAA Project #3);
- Expansion of public access at Bear Creek Redwoods (MAA Project #21);
- Planning and design of Bay Area Ridge Trail and wildlife crossings at Highway 17 near Lexington Reservoir (MAA Project #20);
- Advancing a plan for Alpine Road trail improvements (MAA Project #10);
- Protection of farm and ranch land and riparian habitats in the lower San Gregorio and Pescadero/Butano Creek watersheds; and
- Expanding opportunities for Coastal Access at Tunitas Creek Beach and Cowell-Purisima Trail.



Date: February 25, 2020

To: Midpen Board of Directors

RE: Highway 35 Crossing and North Ridge Parking Lot Expansion Feasibility Studies

Dear Board of Directors,

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (Ridge Trail) requests your support for Midpen's staff time to study the feasibility of installing a bike/pedestrian crossing and a spur trail from the proposed SFPUC trail on the east side of Hwy 35 to the North Ridge Parking Lot. This project would also study the feasibility of expanding the North Ridge Parking Lot to accommodate increased users due to the proposed trail. Midpen has obtained a commitment of funding and support for these studies from Ridge Trail, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), and San Francisco Public Utility Commission (SFPUC). If feasible, the crossing represents an opportunity to complete a 100-mile almost contiguous Bay Area Ridge Trail segment from Big Rock in Marin County to Wunderlich County Park.

Determining the feasibility of the highway crossing and staging area expansion is timely because of the SFPUC's Southern Skyline Ridge Trail that is proposed to begin construction in 2021 and open in 2022. When completed, the Southern Skyline Ridge Trail will begin at the intersection of Highway 92/35 with a new proposed staging area and will continue south until it reaches the property line of the Phleger Estate (owned by Golden Gate National Recreation Area). Trail connections on the Phleger Estate are not planned to open for many years, making the Hwy 35 bike/ped crossing to the existing network of trails at the Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Purisma) even more important. The implementation of a Hwy 35 bike/ped crossing would allow a trail user to park at Hwy 92/35, hike along the new Southern Skyline Ridge Trail, continue their adventure along the dedicated Ridge Trail in Purisima, then along the Skyline Trail to a staging area at Wunderlich County Park and/or El Corte de Madera. The crossing would create a one-way 20-mile continuous Ridge Trail experience. This future route even includes an existing bus stop at Hwy 92/35 and midway-point overnight opportunities at Huddart County Park.

Thank you for your consideration in prioritizing the feasibility studies that support this critical regional trail connection.

Sincerely,
Liz Westbrook
Trail Program Director