



VIEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT · SPRING 2026



Wildflower season is here, enticing us all to be part of a scavenger hunt throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains. Inside this issue learn about both rare native wildflowers, and common ones like these California poppies, and how in some areas their life cycles are supported by conservation grazing. (Kristin Perry/Midpen)

Wildlife Conservation is in our DNA

New Genetics Study Reveals the Rarity of Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rats

Following the exciting rediscovery of the Santa Cruz kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys venustus venustus*) in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve in 2019, Midpen and collaborators at UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo launched a five-year genetics research project to learn more about kangaroo rat populations in Central California.

Using live-capture traps and historic museum specimens, researchers collected and analyzed samples of kangaroo rat DNA. Findings about their evolutionary history and range have

recently been released and are now being used to develop science-based conservation strategies to protect this rare endemic species.

Santa Cruz kangaroo rats once populated the Santa Cruz Mountains as far north as Portola Valley and as far south as Fremont Peak State Park. Today, the population in Sierra Azul Preserve is confirmed by the genetics study to be one of only two known populations that remain. The other population inhabits a region of the Santa Cruz Mountains near Felton in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

“The discovery of Santa Cruz kangaroo rats in Sierra Azul Preserve changed our approach to projects in the area. The results of the genetics study are helping Midpen best support the future of this rare species.”

—Midpen Wildlife Biologist
Matt Sharp Chaney

“The findings of the genetics study support the argument that Santa Cruz kangaroo rats should be listed and protected as an endangered species,” said Midpen Wildlife Biologist Matt Sharp Chaney. “They have limited numbers and poor genetic diversity and continue to be threatened by habitat fragmentation.”

Contrary to their name, these rare rodents are more closely related to chipmunks than to kangaroos or rats. They can be found in areas of loose, sandy soil in chaparral habitat

where they burrow and store seeds—particularly from manzanitas—for future meals. The seeds that remain uneaten are protected from wildfire, helping the plants regenerate. Santa Cruz kangaroo rats’ critical role in maintaining ecological balance makes them a keystone species of the chaparral.

Habitat loss and fragmentation due to development and changes in vegetation management have made the Santa Cruz kangaroo rat population vulnerable. Fire suppression over many decades has allowed knobcone pines and other plants to slowly encroach into chaparral, increasing the density of brush and shrinking areas with the open, sandy soils kangaroo rats need.

To protect and enhance Sierra Azul Preserve’s Santa Cruz kangaroo rat population and its chaparral habitat, Midpen is developing a plan using science-based conservation strategies informed in-part by the recently completed genetics study. The plan includes habitat connectivity modeling, translocation and species monitoring. It will also expand on ongoing wildfire resiliency work to selectively manage vegetation in a way that expands suitable kangaroo rat habitat and reduces wildfire risk in the area.

Learn more and see a video of the research in action at openpace.org/kangaroo-rat.



Ken Hickman used wildlife cameras to discover that Santa Cruz kangaroo rats still lived in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. (Ken Hickman)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Water Ways

A new well helps a coastal watershed flow through the summer to benefit fish and agriculture downstream.

Frances Freyberg



Fire Followers

Ongoing pile burns in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve do more than just reduce flammable vegetation.

Jim Mort/Midpen



Flora and Fauna

Wildflowers bloom with a little help from conservation grazing, while wildlife habitat and protections grow.

Kristin Perry/Midpen

Unsung Heroes

Updating Culverts Protects Trails and Watersheds



Ana María Ruiz

While exploring trails, we are drawn to the sights and sounds that surround us: The light filtering through trees, the call of a songbird or a breathtaking vista. As you travel along the trails, a less sentient element lies across the landscape. An unsung hero that is continuously supporting our ability to safely and responsibly connect people to nature. Culverts!

These critical trail elements are conduits for water runoff, keeping trails passable throughout the year. As we navigate increasingly intense winter seasons, this "invisible" infrastructure has never been more vital. Our recent work at Fremont Older and El Sereno open space preserves highlights our commitment to protecting watersheds and building sustainable trails.

A culvert is essentially a structural tunnel for water to flow underground, across trails. Without them, winter runoff carves deep ruts and causes hillside washouts. Our modern approach to these "tunnels" goes far beyond conveying water; it is a critical part of watershed stewardship.

When a trail washes out, it sends plumes of fine silt into creeks, impacting the water quality for aquatic wildlife such as native fish and amphibians. By responsibly directing surface runoff across trails and ranch roads, we act as a first line of defense for water quality miles downstream.

Every fall, Midpen trail crews typically transition from large-scale trail repairs and construction projects to annual "trail checks" in anticipation of winter storms. While cleaning out culverts is sufficient for many sites, some culverts require full-scale replacements and upgrades to meet the changing climatic conditions.

Within Fremont Older Preserve, staff recently completed the replacement of a culvert along Prospect Road. Severely damaged during the unusually heavy 2022-2023 winter storms, this culvert transfers water into Prospect Creek, supports an entry point to the preserve's 12-mile trail network and facilitates the only

vehicular access for residents living beyond the entrance gate. Our work here fixed a landslide adjacent to the road and added a new headwall to further stabilize the hillside and prevent future erosion.

Further south in El Sereno Open Space Preserve, our work on the Serenity Trail mirrors these goals.

By fortifying specific drainage points, we prevent the "washout" effect that can isolate portions of the trail system. Investing in these quiet, underground upgrades is one small way of helping protected public open space lands remain resilient, accessible and ecologically healthy.



Right-sized culverts were an important part of the new trail construction in Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve last year. (Frances Freyberg)

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Midpen helps plants, animals and people thrive throughout the greater Santa Cruz Mountains region by preserving a connected greenbelt of more than 70,000 acres of public open space. Midpen is a public agency created in 1972 by a grassroots voter initiative to protect the green spaces in parts of Santa Clara, San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. We manage 27 open space preserves with more than 250 miles of trails for you to explore, free of charge, all year long.

Our Mission: To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Our mission on the San Mateo County Coast: To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

BOARD MEETINGS

Are held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 p.m. in-person and via Zoom. For details visit openspace.org/board-meetings.

Ana María Ruiz, General Manager
Leigh Ann Gessner, Open Space Views Editor
Katie Renz, Guided Activities Editor

Wildflower Wonder

Conservation Grazing Can Support Rare and Common Blooms

It's the time of year when pinks, purples, yellows and blues begin to decorate the landscape at many of Midpen's preserves. Wildflower season is a visual reminder of the diverse ecosystems throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains region. This diversity of habitats and the different plants and wildlife that rely on them are supported by a variety of land management strategies.

Conservation grazing is one such practice used by Midpen to protect and enhance biodiversity in coastal grasslands. The periodic disturbances caused by grazing create a favorable

setting for grassland native plants and wildflowers to thrive. Historically, the disturbances that grassland ecosystems evolved with would have been caused by native wildlife herds as well as periodic natural fires and Native American burning practices. Today, cattle — carefully managed for conservation goals—can help provide that role in the ecosystem. These disturbances keep grasslands open and prevent them from being overtaken by shrubs and forests.

"Plants find success through a remarkable variety of different evolutionary strategies. Some are strong competitors. Others are very tolerant of stress and disturbance, which can help them avoid direct competition," said Midpen Rangeland Ecologist and Botanist Lewis Reed.

Midpen's conservation grazing program occurs in preserves on the San Mateo County coast, where Midpen's unique coastal mission includes supporting viable agriculture. Today, these coastal grasslands are dominated by introduced species. As cattle graze on the often taller and more competitive introduced grasses, they allow sunlight to reach shorter native species and reduce competition for soil nutrients.

With improved access to the resources they need, these native plants and wildflowers are better equipped to grow and bloom across the grasslands in the springtime.

Grazing disturbances help support several rare wildflower species that occur on Midpen's conservation grazing properties, including Pappose tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *parryi*), popcorn flowers (*Plagiobothrys chorisianus* ssp. *chorisianus* and *P. chorisianus* ssp.

hickmanii) and the locally rare tarplants (*Hemizonia congesta* ssp. *lutescens* and *Deinandra fasciculata*). These plants' grassland adaptations allow them to prosper in these spaces.

"Bringing diverse and dynamic land management strategies to Midpen preserves supports diverse and dynamic ecosystems and environments."

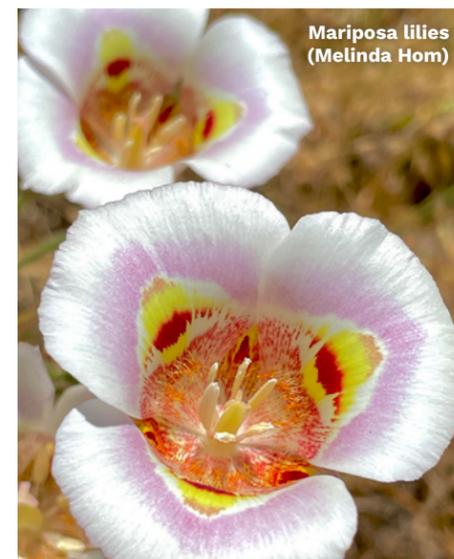
—Midpen Botanist Lewis Reed

Suncups, California poppies, lupines and tidy tips are more common wildflowers that also benefit from the moderating effect of cattle grazing on exotic annual grasses by reducing competition. Their vibrant flowers dot Midpen grasslands and grazing areas in a myriad of colors during the spring.

Some trails in La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve and the Mindego Hill area of Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve overlap with pastures, allowing visitors to witness how wildflowers can thrive in areas with carefully managed conservation grazing.

Utilizing a diversity of land management strategies in Midpen preserves helps sustain native plant and wildlife species across the Santa Cruz Mountains and San Mateo County coast, including hundreds of wildflower species that bloom during the spring and summer.

Learn more at openspace.org/wildflowers.



Mariposa lilies (Melinda Hom)

Fire Followers

Fire is another kind of periodic disturbance that native grassland plants evolved with, and can benefit from.

Soon after burns, certain native plants called "fire-followers" begin to spring up from the ground.

These plants, including red maids, soaproot, mariposa lily, island manzanita, and chamise are adapted to fire and the heat or smoke of fire helps germinate their seeds.



Red maids (Frances Freyberg)



Lupine in La Honda Creek Preserve. (Mickey Rush)

Abandoned vehicles and other debris totalling more than 900,000 pounds was removed from open space properties recently added to Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. (Midpen staff)



Healing the Land

Revealing the Hidden Work of Restoration

When Midpen acquires new land, we frequently inherit the heavy footprints of past uses by people. In some cases, these can include dilapidated structures, abandoned vehicles and decades of human debris.

Midpen recently wrapped up the restoration of several recently acquired properties totalling approximately 40 acres that were incorporated into Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. Midpen crews worked to improve the health of these landscapes beginning with the removal of more than 900,000 pounds of human debris.

“It was a privilege to have a direct role in healing the land.”

—Midpen Capital Project Manager Ayden Sabharwal

Teams carefully removed and disposed of any lead- and asbestos-containing building materials, as well as old septic systems to protect the health of the restoration workers and to ensure no pollutants entered the local watershed.

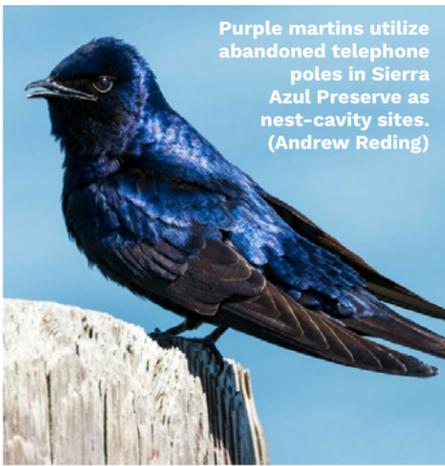
Specialists re-graded the land to mimic its natural, pre-development slopes to restore original drainage patterns. The final touch involved hand-seeding and spreading weed-free straw to jumpstart the return of native chaparral and forest.

“Our goal is to work in a way that supports the ecological well-being of the land,” said Midpen Capital Project Manager Ayden Sabharwal.

Not every human footprint from the past was removed. Old telephone poles were left standing because they can be used as nest-cavity sites by purple martins, a migratory swallow recently discovered to nest in the preserve.

Beyond wildlife habitat, this cleanup also supports the future Umunhum-to-the-Sea regional trail because the properties lie along the future trail corridor.

See video from a utility pole nest camera at openspace.org/purple-martin.



Purple martins utilize abandoned telephone poles in Sierra Azul Preserve as nest-cavity sites. (Andrew Reding)

Good Fire on the Landscape

Pile Burning Continues in Sierra Azul Preserve

As part of our ongoing commitment to ecological health and wildland fire resilience, trained Midpen staff conducted a second round of pile burns in a closed area of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve near Los Gatos in February and March, on the heels of the first round of pile burns in the same location in late 2025.

By burning approximately 50 additional piles, Midpen successfully reduced combustible vegetation in a strategic area of this vast preserve without

needing to haul material off-site.

These burns are just one of several components of Midpen’s larger Wildland Fire Resiliency Program, which reduces wildland fire severity within preserves through ecologically sensitive vegetation management.

“These pile burns are a vital step in building more resilient open space lands,” said Midpen General Manager Ana María Ruiz.

Good Fire, Safely

Pile burning is one of several vegetation

management tools Midpen employs to reduce “fuel loads,” which is the accumulation of flammable vegetation, to more natural levels. Pile burns only occur when wind, temperature, humidity and air quality meet the strict requirements of the local air quality monitoring agencies.

“By carefully returning fire to the landscape, we are doing our part to increase the land’s resilience to wildfires and mimic the natural processes that the local ecosystem relies on to thrive.”

—Midpen GM Ana María Ruiz

Staff continuously monitor conditions throughout burn days. To protect local wildlife that may take shelter in the constructed piles, trained biological monitors inspect every pile prior to ignition. The vegetation piles are built in an open grassland area.

Ecological Benefits

California’s landscape evolved with periodic wildfires as a natural part of the landscape and as a land management tool used by Indigenous People in this region for millennia. Post-burn ash and char benefit plants by returning essential nutrients to the soil.



Fire returns essential nutrients to the soil. A California poppy grows out of a recently burned area in a Midpen preserve. (Strether Smith)

New Upstream Well Supports Downstream Fish and Agriculture

This spring, Midpen is removing a historic stream diversion in La Honda Creek and replacing it with a solar-powered well system. The old stream diversion was part of the inherited infrastructure that came with the land when the property was acquired and became part of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

“Midpen has now protected approximately one-third of the entire San Gregorio Creek watershed, particularly in the upper reaches and headwaters,” said Midpen Senior Resource Management Specialist David Liefert. “This creates a huge opportunity for Midpen to influence wildlife habitat and water availability throughout the watershed, including in the lower-elevation areas where most of the prime real estate for fish and agricultural uses are located.”

When the new well and pumping infrastructure are complete, more water will remain in the creeks for wildlife, particularly during the long dry season. At the same time, by converting the water system to a well, Midpen is creating a more resilient water supply for the ongoing conservation grazing operations throughout the preserve.

“Midpen has now protected approximately one-third of the entire San Gregorio Creek watershed.”

—Midpen Senior Resource Management Specialist David Liefert



San Gregorio Creek (Midpen staff)

The San Gregorio Creek watershed is one of the few remaining places on the central coast where coho salmon and steelhead trout migrate from the ocean into freshwater streams to reproduce. These fish are both listed under the federal endangered species act, and much of San Gregorio Creek has been designated as critical habitat for their recovery back to healthy populations.

In alignment with Midpen’s unique coastal mission, which includes supporting viable agriculture, the legacy of ranching continues in La Honda Creek Preserve through Midpen’s conservation grazing program, utilized as a land management tool to support native biodiversity in coastal grasslands.

Replacing this creek water diversion with a well also supports downstream fisheries recovery projects that are being led by Midpen and the San Mateo Resource Conservation District. Projects include a watershed-wide stream health assessment, in-stream installations of wood to improve fish habitat and fish population monitoring.

Learn more at openspace.org/watersheds.



Biologists inspect the piles for wildlife prior to ignition. (Matt Sharp Chaney/Midpen)

Critical Partnerships

These pile burns serve as a precursor to a larger-scale prescribed burn planned for the fall of 2026 in partnership with CAL FIRE. Piles were also burned in this same area in partnership with Santa Clara County Fire at the end of 2025.

“Strategic collaborations with CAL FIRE and Santa Clara County Fire Department are essential to building up the long-term health of our local ecosystems,” said Midpen Field Resource Specialist Chelsea Young.

For more information about Midpen’s Wildland Fire Resiliency Program and updates on scheduled burns, please visit openspace.org/fire.



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, California 94022
650-691-1200
info@openspace.org
openspace.org

PRINTED WITH SOY INK
PRINTED ON CHLORINE-FREE 30% POST-CONSUMER WASTE PAPER

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oakland, CA
Permit #810

Stay Connected to Your Open Space

Sign up to receive Midpen's print or electronic newsletters, and email updates on preserves and projects.

openspace.org/opt-in

Follow us on social media:



GET INSPIRED!

Photo Contest Begins April 1

Midpen's annual contest celebrates its 17th year in 2026. Submissions will be accepted starting in April across multiple categories including:

- Wildlife
- Landscapes
- Plant Life
- People in Nature
- And more!

A winner will be selected and receive prizes in each category.

Find out what's new this year, more details and how to submit your favorite photos taken in a Midpen preserve at openspace.org/photo-contest.



Jeff Regan

Room to Roam

New Protections for Local Mountain Lions Highlights Need to Link Landscapes

On February 12, the California Fish and Game Commission voted to list the mountain lion population in the Santa Cruz Mountains as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act, in-part due to the effects of habitat fragmentation and geographic isolation. This landmark vote came on the heels of a female mountain lion being killed on Highway 17 on February 4 at the location of Midpen's planned wildlife crossing, and a young mountain lion making a splash in the news in late January after turning up in urban San Francisco.

The mountain lion that found his way to the City is known to researchers as 157M, and was likely born in Rancho San Antonio County Park & Open Space Preserve near Cupertino, nearly 50 miles away. While 157M was successfully returned to natural habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains, his arduous journey underscores the need to link landscapes that have been fragmented by roads and human development for far-ranging wildlife. Mountain lions are highly

“On a larger scale, Midpen’s Highway 17 wildlife crossing project will become a critical part of an essential network of other similar projects regionally and across the state that are allowing wildlife to move safely through the landscape.”

—Midpen Senior Wildlife Biologist Karine Tokatlian

territorial and require large ranges of 60 to 100 square-miles to thrive.

A primary solution to keeping mountain lions out of urban areas and within their natural habitats is specially designed wildlife crossings. Midpen, in partnership with CalTrans and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority,

are advancing the Highway 17 Wildlife and Trail Crossings project near Los Gatos to connect 30,000 acres of protected public lands on either side of the highway for wildlife to traverse while also connecting recreational trails for people.

“Young lions must disperse to establish their own ranges,” explained Midpen Senior Wildlife Biologist Karine Tokatlian. “By reconnecting areas of core habitat across Highway 17, this crossing will facilitate the natural dispersal and movements of wildlife and support the genetic health of previously isolated populations.”

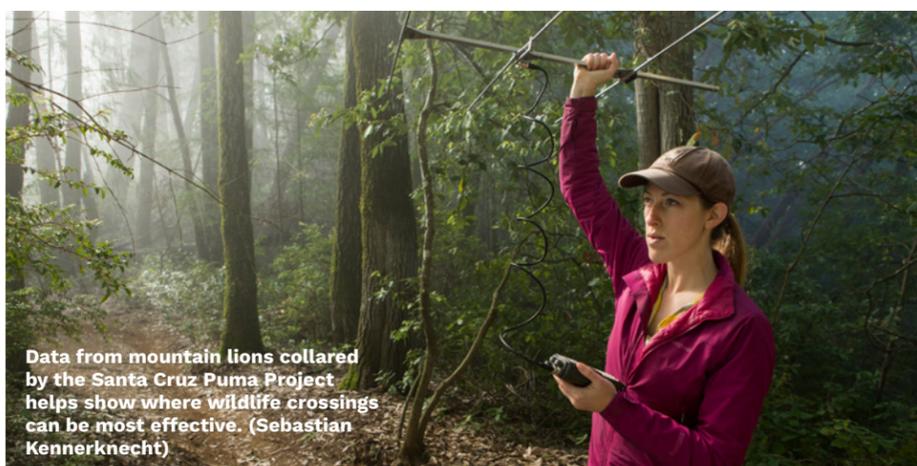
The project's proposed crossing site was selected using GPS collar data gathered from the Santa Cruz Puma Project and bolstered by roadkill and wildlife camera

surveys showing where mountain lions are already attempting to cross Highway 17. According to data from Caltrans and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, this stretch of highway is a major wildlife-vehicle collision hotspot with 19 mountain lions killed on the 20-mile stretch of Highway 17 between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz since 2017.

“Without a crossing at this location, we can expect one to two mountain lions to be killed here every year,” said Tokatlian.

The project has completed environmental review and is in the critical design and engineering phase. While local voters have already dedicated \$14 million toward the project through Midpen's Measure AA, the total cost is estimated at \$40 million. Midpen is actively pursuing additional state and federal funding to close the remaining gap.

Learn more at openspace.org/HWY17.



Data from mountain lions collared by the Santa Cruz Puma Project helps show where wildlife crossings can be most effective. (Sebastian Kennerknecht)

Views Word Search

The following words are hidden in the game grid. Find every word (all of which can also be found in this Views issue!) to reveal a secret message with the unused letters read top to bottom.

AREA	PILE	R	C	D	N	A	R	R	E	I	S
AZUL	RARE	F	U	E	L	L	O	A	D	P	G
BURN	RAT	C	L	E	A	N	U	P	R	R	A
CLEANUP	SIERRA	I	V	W	P	A	N	G	A	Z	W
CULVERT	SOLAR	L	E	R	I	O	F	Z	U	K	A
DEBRIS	SUNCUPS	A	R	A	L	L	I	L	R	A	T
DNA	TARWEED	H	T	T	E	N	D	A	S	N	E
FLOWER	TRAILS	O	E	V	G	E	L	F	L	G	R
FUEL LOAD	WATERSHED	N	R	U	B	O	L	E	I	A	S
GRAZING	WILDFIRE	D	R	R	S	A	E	R	A	R	H
KANGAROO	WELL	A	I	F	L	O	W	E	R	O	E
LA HONDA		S	U	N	C	U	P	S	T	O	D



Spring 2026 Docent Naturalist Guided Activities

Are you ready to explore and enjoy the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves? We invite you to discover these extraordinary places that include many thousands of acres of permanently protected open space, from redwood forest to bay shoreline. All guided activities are developed and provided by docent naturalists who have completed an extensive training program. These docents volunteer their time to enrich your experiences and share knowledge with you about natural and cultural history.

To pique your interest, take a look here at the list of guided activities and then refer to our website openspace.org/guided-activities for all additional needed details. The activities are FREE and only some require reservations. Please note that some preserves have more than one access point and some activities meet at a preserve or location other than where the guided activity will occur. If there is no special "where to meet" information then the activity meets at the preserve's main parking area. For accessibility inquiries, reach out to adacoordinator@openspace.org or by phone at (650) 691-1200 or by dialing the California Relay Service at 711.

March

Where Curiosity Leads

Sunday, March 1
11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
2 miles **M L**

Earthquake Trivia

Sunday, March 1
1:30 – 4 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles **E F**

To the Top

Monday, March 2
10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
8 miles **S L**

Waning Winter

Tuesday, March 3
10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**

Full Moon on Black Mountain

Tuesday, March 3
4 – 8:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
6 miles **R S L**

Explorer Hike: Lichen Eyes

Wednesday, March 4
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
Meet: Skeggs Point Parking Area
4.5 miles **M L**

Ferns & Friends

Friday, March 6
9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
5.5 miles **S L**

Exploring the Hawthorns Area

Saturday, March 7
10 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
2 miles **R E**

Sunset Serenity

Saturday, March 7
2:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
Meet: Mindego Gateway Parking Area
5 miles **S**

Tails & Twilight Trails

Saturday, March 7
6 – 8 p.m.
Fremont Older Preserve
3 miles **R M D**

Redwoods & Logging

Sunday, March 8
8:30 a.m. – Noon
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
4 miles **S**

Wonders of Cherry Springs

Sunday, March 8
9:15 a.m. – 1:25 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
2.5 miles **R M L**

Water Wonders

Sunday, March 8
2 – 5:30 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**

Ramble at Rancho

Monday, March 9
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
5.5 miles **S**

Mindful Movement

Tuesday, March 10
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
3 miles **E L**

Listening for Spring: Bird Walk

Wednesday, March 11
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
2 miles **M**

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, March 11
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
5 miles **S**



Seasonal Somersaults

Thursday, March 12
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve Parking Area
3.5 miles **R M L**

Spring Forward to Mount Umunhum

Friday, March 13
9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Bald Mountain Parking Area
8.5 miles **S L**

Legend

- E Easy Hike/Walk:** Flat to gently rolling hills. Total elevation gain less than 200 feet. Leisurely pace. Frequent stops. Usually less than 3 miles.
- M Moderate Hike:** Steeper or more frequent uphill grades. Total elevation gain 200 to 600 feet. Leisurely to moderate pace. Usually between 3 and 5 miles.
- S Strenuous Hike:** Steep hills and/or long distances. Total elevation gain greater than 600 feet. Moderate to vigorous pace. Usually more than 5 miles.
- A Advanced Mountain Bike Ride:** Intended for participants with dirt single-track riding experience; competent at climbing and descending steep and rough trails. Moderate to fast pace, 10+ mile ride on a wide variety of trail conditions. For experienced riders with a high level of physical fitness and excellent endurance.
- L Meal/Snack Break:** Bring a lunch, dinner or snack as appropriate.
- F Family Friendly:** Suitable for children; must be accompanied and supervised by an adult. See the activity description for any additional information.
- D Dogs:** All dogs must be on a leash, well-behaved and socialized. Please bring water for your dog and be prepared to carry out dog waste.
- R Online Reservations Required:** openspace.org/guided-activities will accept reservations two weeks in advance of an activity date and allow a maximum of four people per reservation. No walk-up participation allowed. Please cancel your reservation if you can no longer attend.

Sarah Schoen



March

Infinite Wonders

Saturday, March 14
9:25 a.m. – 2:50 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
4.5 miles **R S L**

Nature's Sand Art

Saturday, March 14
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
Meet: Skeggs Point Parking Area
3 miles **F M L**

Ride the Redwoods

Saturday, March 14
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
9 miles **R S A**

Framing the Foothills

Sunday, March 15
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
6 miles **S L**



L. Ames

Among the Tides

Sunday, March 15
10 a.m. – Noon
Ravenswood Preserve
2.5 miles **E W**

Sentinel in the Sky

Sunday, March 15
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit
Parking Area
0.25 mile **M**

Signs of Spring

Wednesday, March 18
9 a.m. – Noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4.25 miles **M**

Explorer Hike: Chaparral Adventure

Wednesday, March 18
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
St. Joseph's Hill Preserve
4 miles **S L**



Greg Azevedo

Sunrise Series: Equinox Awakening

Friday, March 20
6:10 – 10:30 a.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
5.25 miles **R M**

My Gall Friday

Friday, March 20
9 a.m. – Noon
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
4 miles **M**

Equinox at Turtle Rock

Friday, March 20
4 – 7:45 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
Meet: Hickory Oaks Roadside Parking
4.5 miles **R M L**

WWW: Wildflowers, Wandering & Wine

Saturday, March 21
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**

Legend

- E Easy Hike/Walk:** Flat to gently rolling hills. Total elevation gain less than 200 feet. Leisurely pace. Frequent stops. Usually less than 3 miles.
- M Moderate Hike:** Steeper or more frequent uphill grades. Total elevation gain 200 to 600 feet. Leisurely to moderate pace. Usually between 3 and 5 miles.
- S Strenuous Hike:** Steep hills and/or long distances. Total elevation gain greater than 600 feet. Moderate to vigorous pace. Usually more than 5 miles.
- A Advanced Mountain Bike Ride:** Intended for participants with dirt single-track riding experience; competent at climbing and descending steep and rough trails. Moderate to fast pace, 10+ mile ride on a wide variety of trail conditions. For experienced riders with a high level of physical fitness and excellent endurance.
- L Meal/Snack Break:** Bring a lunch, dinner or snack as appropriate.
- F Family Friendly:** Suitable for children; must be accompanied and supervised by an adult. See the activity description for any additional information.
- D Dogs:** All dogs must be on a leash, well-behaved and socialized. Please bring water for your dog and be prepared to carry out dog waste.
- W Wheelchair Accessible**
- R Online Reservations Required:** openspace.org/guided-activities will accept reservations two weeks in advance of an activity date and allow a maximum of four people per reservation. No walk-up participation allowed. Please cancel your reservation if you can no longer attend.

Geocaching Hike

Saturday, March 21
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2.5 miles **F M L**

Morning Meander: Newts to Nutmegs

Wednesday, March 25
10 a.m. – Noon
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
2 miles **E**

Trail Trek Thursday

Thursday, March 26
9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Saratoga Gap Preserve
5.5 miles **S L**

Don't Look Up – Spring Edition

Saturday, March 28
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
5.5 miles **S L**

Little Naturalists

Monday, March 30
10 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
1.5 miles **R E F**

April

Wonders of Cherry Springs

Wednesday, April 1
9:35 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
2.5 miles **R M L**

Spring Flower Frolic

Wednesday, April 1
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**

Explorer Hike: Early Spring at the Ridge

Wednesday, April 1
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
5 miles **S L**



Ruben Garcia

Ride the Wildflowers

Saturday, April 4
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
7 miles **R S A**

Infinite Wonders

Sunday, April 5
9:15 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
4.5 miles **R S L**

Geology & Earthquakes!

Sunday, April 5
11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles **E F**

Ramble from Rancho to Black Mountain

Monday, April 6
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
11 miles **R S L**

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, April 8
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Bald Mountain Parking Area
4.5 miles **S**

Wandering the Hawthorns Area

Thursday, April 9
10 a.m. – Noon
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Directions emailed
2 miles **R M**

Spineless Wonders

Friday, April 10
6:30 – 10:15 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
3 miles **R M L**

Scenic Amble Between Lake & Pond

Saturday, April 11
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**



Midpen

Tails & Twilight Trails

Saturday, April 11
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
Meet: Allen Road Permit Parking Area
3.25 miles **R M D**

Faultlines & Flowers

Sunday, April 12
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles **E F**

Sentinel in the Sky

Sunday, April 12
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit
Parking Area
0.25 mile **M**

Mindful Movement

Tuesday, April 14
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
3 miles **E L**

Signs of Spring

Wednesday, April 15
9 a.m. – Noon
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
4.25 miles **M**

Explorer Hike: Spring Along the Woods Trail

Wednesday, April 15
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
5 miles **M L**

The Roads We Travel

Thursday, April 16
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
5.5 miles **S L**

A Spiritual Hike: Healing the Soul

Thursday, April 16
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve
Meet: Skeggs Point Parking Area
4 miles **S**

New Trails at La Honda Creek

Friday, April 17
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
Meet: Allen Road Permit Parking Area
6.5 miles **R S L**

Local History, Wildflowers & Bikes!

Saturday, April 18
9:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Fremont Older Preserve
11 miles **R S A**

Ferns & Other Ancient Plants

Saturday, April 18
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3.5 miles **M L**

Scenic Skyline Sampler

Sunday, April 19
9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
7.75 miles **S L**



Aerobic Nature Hike

Tuesday, April 21
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
6 miles **S**

Earth Day Work Party & Hike

Wednesday, April 22
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
3 miles **R M L**

Morning Meander: Forest to Chaparral

Wednesday, April 22
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
2 miles **E**

My Gall Friday

Friday, April 24
9 a.m. – Noon
Long Ridge Preserve
Meet: Hickory Oaks Roadside Parking
3.5 miles **M**



How Flowers Changed the World

Friday, April 24
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve Parking Area
3 miles **R M**

Habitat Sampler

Saturday, April 25
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
La Honda Creek Preserve
2 miles **E F L**

Spring Explorations

Monday, April 27
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
4 miles **M L**

Wildflowers at their Finest

Wednesday, April 29
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
5 miles **S**

Trail Trek Thursday

Thursday, April 30
9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
6 miles **S**

May

Flowers & Fancy

Friday, May 1
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
3.5 miles **M L**

The Perfect Picnic Spot

Saturday, May 2
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
2 miles **E F L**

Ride the Wildflowers

Saturday, May 2
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
7 miles **R S A**

Poisonous Plants!

Saturday, May 2
Noon – 2 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles **E**

Wonders of Cherry Springs

Sunday, May 3
9:15 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Camden Park & Ride Lot
2.5 miles **R M L**



Secrets of the Oaks

Sunday, May 3
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve Parking Area
5 miles **R M L**

Geology & Earthquakes!

Sunday, May 3
11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Los Trancos Preserve
2 miles **E F**

Wildcard Ramble at Rancho

Monday, May 4
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Meet: Lot 6
7 miles **S L**

Explorer Hike: Redwoods & Friends

Wednesday, May 6
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve
5.5 miles **S L**

Butterflies of Picchetti Ranch

Saturday, May 9
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
3 miles **R M**

Sunset From the Ridge

Saturday, May 9
5 – 7:30 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
Meet: Mindego Gateway Parking Area
3 miles **M L**

Tails & Twilight Trails

Saturday, May 9
7 – 9 p.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
3 miles **R M D**

Mindful Movement

Tuesday, May 12
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
3 miles **M L**

Scenic Aerobic Hike

Wednesday, May 13
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
5 miles **S**

Botanical Beauties

Friday, May 15
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Jacques Ridge Parking Area
5 miles **M**

Happy Hour Qigong Hike

Friday, May 15
4 – 7 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3 miles **M**

WWW: Wildflowers, Wandering & Wine

Saturday, May 16
10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Picchetti Ranch Preserve
4.5 miles **M L**

Infinite Wonders

Sunday, May 17
9 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Camden Park & Ride Lot
4.5 miles **R S L**

Waterwheel Downhill Ride

Sunday, May 17
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve Parking Area
17 miles **R S A**

Sentinel in the Sky

Sunday, May 17
1 – 3 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit Parking Area
0.25 mile **M**



Explorer Hike: Two Ponds and a View

Wednesday, May 20
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Skyline Ridge Preserve
4 miles **M L**

Butterflies of Sierra Azul

Friday, May 22
10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Bald Mountain Parking Area
5 miles **M L**

Celebrating Female Bird Day

Sunday, May 24
7:30 – 10:30 a.m.
Windy Hill Preserve
Meet: Lower Windy Hill Parking Area
2 miles **M**

Tick-led by Nature

Sunday, May 24
9 – 11:30 a.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
3 miles **M**



38th Annual Hike the Open Spaces

Monday, May 25
8:30 – 11:20 a.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
Meet: Picchetti Ranch Preserve Parking Area
2.5 miles **R E**

Morning Meander: Grassland to Redwoods

Wednesday, May 27
10 a.m. – Noon
La Honda Creek Preserve
2 miles **E**

Among the Trees, Bushes & Flowers

Thursday, May 28
9 a.m. – Noon
Pulgarcillo Preserve
4.25 miles **M**

Trail Trek Thursday

Thursday, May 28
9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Fremont Older Preserve
Meet: Stevens Creek County Park Madrone Picnic Area Lot
5.5 miles **S**

My Gall Friday

Friday, May 29
9 a.m. – Noon
Los Trancos Preserve
Meet: Lower Page Mill Roadside Parking
3.5 miles **R M**

Ohlone Medicine

Saturday, May 30
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Long Ridge Preserve
5 miles **M L**

Wildflower Appreciation Afternoon

Saturday, May 30
3 – 7 p.m.
Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve
4 miles **M L**

Summit Ascent: The Sunset Circle

Saturday, May 30
4:30 – 9 p.m.
Sierra Azul Preserve
Meet: Mount Umunhum Summit Parking Area
4 miles **R S L**

Blue Moon on Black Mountain

Sunday, May 31
6:30 – 11 p.m.
Monte Bello Preserve
6 miles **R S L**



Ellen Gartside

Volunteer with Us

Get Dirty for Good

Help restore and maintain open space through hands-on projects in the preserves. With over 100 fun, educational and impactful projects scheduled annually in support of the strategic resource management goals at Midpen, you can positively affect the health of our local landscapes while benefitting from exercise and fresh air in nature.

Projects include habitat restoration (non-native vegetation removal), trail brushing and maintenance, and fence construction and repair. No experience is needed. We provide training, gloves, tools and snacks to keep you going!

When: Volunteer projects are typically scheduled on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Where: Across Midpen's 27 open space preserves.

Below is a small sampling of the projects you'll find scheduled this spring. All three of these opportunities are great for first-time volunteers. Visit the QR code at right to see a list of current opportunities and register for projects listed below. Check back often – new projects are posted on the first Wednesday of every month.

Habitat Restoration French Broom Removal Sierra Azul Preserve Saturday, March 21 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Join a fun workday removing French broom at the Beatty Homestead in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. You'll receive training on plant identification, removal techniques and information about why we want to remove this plant from our local landscape.



Midpen

Trail Maintenance Picchetti Ranch Preserve Thursday, March 26 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Assist with maintenance of the Zinfandel Trail in Picchetti Ranch Preserve. Did you know there's a working winery and tasting room at this preserve? You'll work to clear accumulated soil from the uphill side of the trail to restore the tread width, make minor tread improvements and trim vegetation if needed. Staff will provide training on hand-tool safety and guide volunteers in

performing typical maintenance activities.

Earth Day Work Party & Hike Russian Ridge Preserve Wednesday, April 22 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Part hands-on restoration and part interpretative outing, Midpen staff and volunteer docents will lead you on this introductory activity that exposes participants to two of our most popular public activities – volunteering and guided hikes!



Karl Gohl

Nature Center Season Begins

The David C. Daniels Nature Center, located on the edge of Alpine Pond at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, opens for the season on Saturday, April 4, 2026. Come by to explore the exhibits and engage with docents Saturdays and Sundays from noon until 5 p.m. during spring and summer. Learn more and plan your visit at openspace.org/nature-center.

Partner Hikes!

At Midpen we're proud to partner with local agencies that support Midpen's mission. Join our partners on guided hikes that bring people together, creating shared moments of discovery and a sense of community in the outdoors. Please contact partners directly to register for hikes.

Saved by Nature
savedbynature.org
April 4, 2026, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Cloverdale Ranch Preserve
Whale-Watching Hike

Bay Area Older Adults
bayareaolderadults.org
March 18, 2026, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Pulgas Ridge Preserve
Wildflowers Hike

April 22, 2026, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Russian Ridge Preserve
Wildflower Trek

Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
vistacenter.org

March 26, 2026, 10 a.m. – Noon
Rancho San Antonio Preserve
Walk to Deer Hollow Farm

April 30, 2026, 10 a.m. – Noon
La Honda Creek Preserve
Grasshopper Loop Trail

May 28, 2026, 10 a.m. – Noon
Skyline Ridge Preserve
Horseshoe Lake