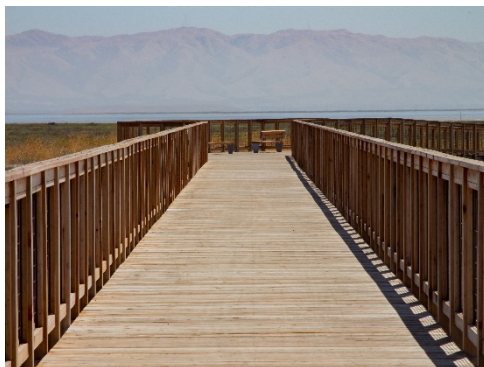




Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

# Major Accomplishments Report

July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020



# FY20 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## **Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District**

### **Mission Statement:**

*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.*

### **Coastside Protection Mission Statement:**

*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.*

The following accomplishments highlight the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) focused efforts on a balanced mission — land acquisition and preservation; natural resources protection and restoration; public access, education and outreach; and for the Coastside, supporting local agriculture and preserving rural character.

These extensive and varied accomplishments include major projects to expand public access to preserves, including completing the Ravenswood Bay Trail connection at Ravenswood Open Space Preserve. They also show extensive progress on resource restoration priorities; education and outreach to diverse visitors; collaborative conservation and educational partnerships with other organizations; and the ongoing operational requirements of preserving nearly 65,000 acres of public open space.

On the San Mateo County Coast, accomplishments also include improving agricultural infrastructure to continue the conservation grazing program to protect coastal grasslands and preserving the Coast's rural character and scenic open landscapes. In addition to completing projects on the land, Midpen has also placed significant effort in strengthening the administrative and organizational systems that are necessary to support our mission, now and into the future.

COVID 19 had a major impact on project and program delivery. Field staff operations were limited to essential operations. All group events, permit, volunteer activities were cancelled. All construction activities were shut down or delayed. Many staff efforts were shifted to keeping preserves open as a haven for safe outdoor recreation which was one of the few outlets allowed for the public under shelter in place orders. Midpen saw record visitation levels through the end of the fiscal year and continuing currently. Field staff has been active managing increased use.

All in all, FY20 was a busy, productive, and rewarding year! Much was accomplished and staff were able to shift gears and work to keep preserves open as an essential activity for public physical and mental health.

#### LAND ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

- ❖ Purchased, exchanged or received gifts of 542.6 acres of open space lands valued at \$12.668 million dollars, including:
  - Purchase of the 540-acre Gordon Ridge property as an addition to ***Tunitas Creek Preserve*** -- advances land conservation opportunities in Vision Plan Portfolio 32 to support additional watershed preservation and conservation grazing.
  - Purchase of the 1.7-acre Chet Gallaway property as an addition to ***El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve*** -- advances land conservation opportunities in Measure AA portfolio 4 to support recreational trail access and water quality projects.
  - Received three Redwood Park gift parcels totaling 0.4 acres as part of ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
  - Negotiated an exchange of easements that has secured public access over a portion of private property along a segment of the popular Kennedy Trail in the ***Sierra Azul Preserve***.
- ❖ Made significant progress working with San Mateo County and received County Planning Commission approval to amend the Local Coastal Program zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure consistency between County regulations and the California Coastal Act as it effects public open space lands and provisions that support agricultural activities while also allowing public recreational uses. Efforts encompassed presentations and discussions at 14 public and community meetings, including the Farm Bureau, Agricultural Advisory Committee, Pescadero Municipal Advisory Committee and MidCoast Advisory Council.
- ❖ Received board approval for the acquisition of the 151-acre Irish Ridge property, valued at \$1.562 million dollars as an addition to ***Tunitas Creek Preserve***. Completing the acquisition is contingent on San Mateo County approving a land division application.
- ❖ Made significant progress on the acquisition of the 371-acre South Cowell Ranch upland property as an addition to ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***. Completed due diligence studies and investigations. Proceeding with the potential acquisition in partnership with Peninsula Open Space Trust.
- ❖ Made significant progress on the acquisition of the 182-acre San Jose Water Company inholding in ***El Sereno Preserve***. Board approval is scheduled for July 2020.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

- ❖ Continued natural resources protection and restoration projects in ***Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve***, including:

- Completed the Mud Lake improvements project, replacing the spillway and outlet, installing 115 linear feet of storm water swale improvements, replacing 200 linear feet of storm water culverts, and replacing a 60-foot long culvert under Bear Creek Road. A funding agreement between Midpen and the County of Santa Clara was executed in September 2019, reimbursing Midpen for the Bear Creek Road culvert replacement work. This project protects pond habitats, reconnects the pond to its natural stream, and protects Bear Creek Road from flood risks.
  - Began third year of targeted invasive species removal with partial funding from a five-year Valley Water grant. Treated select sites considered the most important and/or where plant life stage was most conducive to treatment.
  - Removed overgrown trees from a former Christmas tree farm and planted native trees to restore the site to a natural condition.
  - Completed site investigations and preliminary historic resource evaluations for an old landfill.
- ❖ Completed third (and final) year of a stream gauge and sediment study at ***El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve*** to assess the effectiveness of erosion reduction projects completed under the preserve-wide Watershed Protection Program; findings have concluded a net reduction of sediment in important fishery streams – furthering the goals of the Program.
  - ❖ Monitored sensitive species populations to assess success of habitat restoration projects in ***La Honda Creek Preserve***.
  - ❖ Completed numerous natural resource protection and restoration projects in ***Sierra Azul Preserve***, including:
    - Year eight of a multi-agency coordinated monitoring effort to reduce mercury within the Guadalupe River watershed.
    - Final Cherry Springs Lake Infrastructure Operations Plan for the long-term maintenance of the Cherry Springs water system and lake water levels.
    - Invasive weed work at the Twin Creeks property to remove non-native invasive plants within a lush riparian corridor with perennial streams.
    - Invasive plant monitoring and management as follow-up work for the Hendrys Creek Land Restoration project to protect creek habitat, reduce sedimentation, and ensure the success of land restoration efforts.
  - ❖ Continued our partnership with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to conduct outreach and treatment of high-priority invasive plants on adjacent private properties, thus expanding citizen awareness and action to control invasive plants on private lands and also avoid re-infestation of adjacent, protected open space lands.
  - ❖ Continued the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings Project that will provide a safe wildlife corridor and a separate regional trail crossing across Highway 17.

- Collaborated with partner agencies (Caltrans, Santa Clara County Parks, Valley Water, Bay Area Ridge Trail) to identify opportunities for a Highway 17 public trail crossing to close a major gap in the regional trail system.
  - Completed a feasibility study of potential trail routes for a future trail crossing. The study was reviewed by the public and agency partners.
  - Completed a Project Study Report and initiated the Project Approval and Environmental Document phase of work with Caltrans.
  - Hired consultant team to assist Midpen with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and Caltrans documentation.
- ❖ Provided support related to natural resource protection and restoration, including:
- Updated the resource management chapter of both the Ranger Operations and Maintenance Operations manuals with information and guidance related to natural resources trainings, avoidance of special status species, wildlife response, conservation grazing, and other related topics.
  - Completed digitization of cultural resources files in a centralized, secure location and developed GIS and records systems to make data easily available for future project needs and assessments.
  - Made progress on creating a San Mateo County Vegetation Map: consultants delivered 6-inch ortho-imagery, 1-foot elevation contours, canopy height and canopy closure models, impervious surfaces and ladder fuels maps. These data improve scientific understanding of vegetation conditions and changes, allowing Midpen and adjacent agencies to better manage fire and fuel projects in the wildland-urban interface.
  - Monitored 17 ponds, streams, springs and other regulated aquatic sites where water is diverted for consumptive use. Completed annual report on use to the State Water Resources Control Board.
  - Developed and implemented sixth year of Invasive Pest Management Program activities to improve native habitats by removing invasive nonnative plants.
  - Provided annual training for staff and contractors on pesticide safety, the IPM Program and best management practices.
  - Implemented 20 new invasive species management projects, adding 12.9 acres to the 1,251 acres under active invasive species management.
  - Continued phytophthora research with Oregon State University regarding soil pathogens at restoration sites to protect native vegetation from the fungal disease. Waiting on the final report regarding phytophthora infestations on Midpen lands.



- Continued sudden oak death research in partnership with UC Berkeley and the U.S. Forest Service to study distribution, spread, and treatment methodologies for the forest disease pathogen.
- Completed surveys of the federally-threatened and state-endangered Marbled murrelet and surveyed additional sites (year one of two) at ***La Honda Creek Preserve***. Purchased, deployed and began to analyze acoustic unit data.
- Provided ongoing support (permitting, CEQA compliance, preconstruction surveys, construction monitoring) for priority Measure AA projects.
- Managed 22 on-call biological consultants to support Midpen projects.
- Actively participated in the Wildlife Society and attended the Western Section Wildlife Society Conference.
- Collaborated with outside researchers to perform rare plants surveys and perform bird counts at multiple preserves.
- Completed a third greenhouse gas inventory of administrative operations in support of Midpen's Climate Action Plan, adopted in October 2018, to reduce in-house operational carbon emissions.
- Entered into contract with San Francisco Estuary Institute to convene a multi-disciplinary Science Advisory Panel to conduct scientific review on key Midpen topics. The board selected the following three research topics for the panel to evaluate:
  - How can Midpen effectively and efficiently monitor changes in priority plant and animal populations at the landscape scale?
  - What are the visitation and recreational use benefits and trade-offs to fulfilling Midpen goals, including natural resource protection and ecologically-sensitive public enjoyment and education?
  - Review of cattle grazing benefits and impacts:
    - What is the net climate impact of cattle grazing (e.g., potential increase in soil carbon minus cattle methane emissions)? What are Midpen's options, such as grazing regimes or dietary additives, to reduce emissions from cattle grazing?
    - What are the current scientific results on the effectiveness of managing grasslands and reducing fire risk with cattle grazing?
    - How does cattle grazing as a land management strategy compare to alternatives in achieving Midpen goals including climate protection and what are the trade-offs?
- Completed a water rights investigation and a geotechnical study for the Toto Ponds Management Planning Project.

- Completed first round of fall, winter and spring (limited) surveys for the Badger/Burrowing Owl Habitat Assessment Project, confirming presence of both species at various preserve locations.
- ❖ Completed numerous resource agency permit streamlining efforts, including:
  - Drafted the program manual for the Programmatic Permitting Project in coordination with the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program that addresses species and resource considerations for routine maintenance, habitat restoration, and small-scale projects on Midpen lands.
  - Maintained strong relationships with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to support protected species recovery work.
- ❖ Completed projects that support Midpen’s conservation grazing program, including:
  - Third year of adjudication compliance monitoring and actions to improve water use and management of San Gregorio Creek.
  - Completed key steps for the **Russian Ridge Preserve** Mindego Pond Improvements Project: construction documents, basis of design, Integrated Pest Management Plan, and vegetation management plan. Received a grazing exemption from the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and a Section 401 Permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Construction of the pond repairs is planned for the fall 2020.
  - Held agricultural producer site tours with the Board and a public agency workshop to gather information to update Midpen’s agriculture policies. Held stakeholder and public meetings to further refine the proposed Grazing Management Policy Amendment, which will be brought to the Board in fall 2020.
  - Developed the scope of work for the Purisima Creek fence construction project, completed the bid process, and awarded a contract; work to begin summer of 2020.
  - Completed a virtual bid process for the Upper La Honda Creek Grazing Infrastructure Project and awarded a contract for construction; work to be completed by late 2020.
  - Completed repairs to part of the spring system at Big Dipper Ranch.
  - Completed the Toto Ranch barn roof and perimeter fence repairs at **Tunitas Creek Preserve**.

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

- ❖ Neared completion of a new 0.6-mile segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail with construction of a new boardwalk and bridge across sensitive bayland wetlands that closes a critical regional trail gap at **Ravenswood Preserve** that will create 80 miles of continuous Bay Trail access.
  - Kicked off the Ravenswood Bay Trail project with a community celebration that recognized the work of dozens of partners.

- ❖ Assisted the City of East Palo Alto in further developing the adjacent Cooley Landing Park by funding habitat restoration work led by Grassroots Ecology to install native plants trail junctions and a native plant trash screen near the parking area.
- ❖ Continued progress on Phase 2 public access projects at ***Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve***, improvements included:
  - Completed restroom construction, adjustments to the new ADA-accessible loop trail, and final punch list items as part of the Bear Creek Redwoods Parking Area construction. Submitted a Notice of Completion to the county for this completed project.
  - Submitted a complete permit application for the Bear Creek Stables Repairs to the County of Santa Clara and confirmed water demands for fire protection for the site.
  - Received permits from Santa Clara County for removal of select dilapidated structures at the preserve and successfully bid and awarded the work, which is scheduled to occur in the fall of 2020. The site cleanup is a critical step for opening the area located east of the new parking lot to public access by removing public safety hazards.
  - Completed the Phase 2 Trail feasibility analysis, basis of design document, preliminary design for new trail structures, protocol botanical surveys, and a cultural/biological resources report in preparation for upcoming trail construction in the northeastern area of the preserve to open this area to public access.
- ❖ Made further progress to convert an old roadbed for recreational trail access known as the Alpine Trail in ***Coal Creek Preserve***, including completion of 65% design documents, an alternatives analysis report, geotechnical investigations and report, wetland and riparian delineation, and botanical surveys and report. Drafted the environmental compliance document, which will soon be released for public comment. Executed a memorandum of understanding with the County of San Mateo regarding the potential transfer of road alignment to Midpen for future management and maintenance.
- ❖ Completed Phase 3 and 4 of the new Oljon Trail connecting Steam Donkey to the Springboard Trail, including final construction and restoration work associated with the Watershed Protection Program at ***El Corte de Madera Creek Preserve***.
  - Celebrated completion of the Oljon Trail project with public ribbon-cutting event that included community partners and user groups.
- ❖ Continued efforts to open additional areas of ***La Honda Creek Preserve*** to the public, including:
  - Formed a Public Access Work Group with constituent representative(s) from each ward and two Board liaisons to identify new, viable parking area and trailhead options to open the central area of the preserve to public access. Held seven working Group meetings between August 2019 and March 2020. The Working Group



recommendations are scheduled to be presented to the Planning and Natural Resources Committee in July 2020.

- Completed a site assessment and basis of design analyzing four different management options for two structures in the preserve. Given the condition of the structures, the Board selected to stabilize the White Barn structure as a landscape and cultural feature for interpretive purposes and remove a Redwood Cabin that has fallen to greater disrepair while salvaging as much of the wood as possible.
- Received grading and resource management permits for the Lower La Honda Creek Phase 2 Loop Trails from the County of San Mateo. Completed biological, cultural and wetland reports and provided them to appropriate resource agencies.
- ❖ Developed and promoted a dog waste program at **Windy Hill, Pulgas Ridge, ThorneWood, and Fremont Older preserves**. Installed dog waste receptacles and signing at high-use preserves that open to dogs. Tracked the effectiveness of the program, which significantly reduced the amount of dog waste left on trails and at trailheads.
- ❖ Completed final bridge construction and revegetation along the Stevens Creek Nature Trail in **Monte Bello Preserve**.
- ❖ Collected traffic data for the Multimodal Access Study at **Rancho San Antonio Preserve** to inform future options for improving parking issues, promoting greener modes of transport, and reducing parking impacts to visitors and adjacent communities, improving the overall preserve visitor experience. Conducted intercept and online surveys of visitors. Implemented short-term solutions such as designating a curbside area for rideshare drop-off/pick-up, installing three bicycle racks, and promoting new bicycle racks on social media platforms.
- ❖ Completed project design, started permitting process with County of Santa Clara, and issued a construction bid request for structural repairs and improvements of the Deer Hollow Farm White Barn at **Rancho San Antonio Preserve**.
- ❖ Completed Phase 3 plant restoration at the Mount Umunhum Summit at **Sierra Azul Preserve**. Midpen volunteers and contractors installed 1,085 nursery plants. A contractor continues to maintain the site, watering and weeding around the newly established plants.
- ❖ Presented project goals and programming options for the Beatty Property Parking Area and Trail Connections at **Sierra Azul Preserve** to the Planning and Natural Resources Committee. Completed onsite field reconnaissance and preliminary assessment of nearby parking facilities. Held consultations with Santa Clara County Parks and Valley Water regarding proposed parking and trail development and permitting requirements. Met with stakeholders to inform the scope of a newt crossing study for Alma Bridge Road.
- ❖ Partnered with City of Saratoga to fund the design and construction of the Saratoga-to-the-Skyline Trail. City completed 50% of trail construction work and drafted interpretive signs.

This partnership project fulfills Midpen's goal for a regional trail connecting Saratoga to the existing Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail and local trail systems.

- ❖ Replaced the decking and installed new railings on the Purisima Creek Bridge at ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
- ❖ Completed multiple district-wide actions in support of public access goals, including:
  - Produced and published quarterly outdoor activities schedules, which are included in the *Open Space Views* newsletter, to promote naturalist-led docent hikes and rides.
  - Outdoor Activity Docents provided over 135 guided interpretive activities for public enrichment (serving approximately 1,300 participants).
  - Hosted a series of eight hikes for the public in partnership with Latino Outdoors at eight different preserves, reaching 151 participants.
  - Researched and tested eight online reservation system platforms and three online payment options. Decided on best option and developed workflow and functionality requirements. Worked with database consultant to develop a report system that will generate appropriate audit documentation. Created desktop guide for process workflow.
  - Hosted informational booths at 18 community outreach events, providing information about Midpen preserves and programs to the public.
  - Sent out 18 press releases on Midpen projects and activities resulting in dozens of stories in various local media outlets to continue informing the public of recent events.
  - Continued ongoing partnerships with local volunteer-based organizations, including Village Harvest, Grassroots Ecology, the Student Conservation Association and Morgan Autism Center, to increase public participation in natural resource management and trail stewardship activities.
  - Volunteers contributed nearly 1,600 hours of natural resource management, special project and trail patrol activities, supporting Midpen's land stewardship and public outreach goals.
  - Actively participated in the Peninsula Working Group's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts to evaluate protocols and program development to expand Midpen's volunteer program outreach to diverse audiences.
  - Provided opportunities for the public to connect to Midpen's mission with over 100 staff-led volunteer projects for the general public and special request groups (scouts, schools, environmental clubs).
  - Opened the Daniels Nature Center in ***Skyline Ridge Preserve*** every weekend from July through mid-November 2019. Hosted and engaged 1,300 adult visitors and 330 children during visits to the facility.

- In fall 2019, eight new Outdoor Activity Docents completed their training and were ready to provide school field trips for spring 2020.
- Advanced Resource Management Stewards volunteers contributed over 650 hours at their assigned resource management project sites, helping to restore native habitat across Midpen preserves.
- Planned, scheduled and coordinated environmental education field trips with Outdoor Education Docents and local schools, including: six fall 2019 and one spring 2020 Spaces & Species field trip for third through fifth grades (approximately 440 students), and five Redwood Ecology & Climate Change high school field learning excursions (in partnership with Save the Redwoods League; approximately 170 students). An additional 1,100 students participated in field trips to **Monte Bello, Los Trancos, and Windy Hill preserves** in partnership with Environmental Volunteers.
- Hosted the annual Volunteer Recognition Event at **Sierra Azul Preserve** to honor and thank our volunteers and docents for their hard work in support of Midpen's mission, which was attended by over 225 volunteers, Board members, and staff.
- All rangers completed Certified Interpretive Guide Training to enhance interpretation skills for activities and presentations, and received certification through the National Association of Interpretation. A group of rangers have performed interpretive activities and have created programming that can be used by other rangers.
- Developed scope and methodologies of Phase 2 of the Visitor Counter Estimation Project and hired an intern to implement the project. The intern installed eight additional counters at all significant entrances to **Rancho San Antonio Preserve** to capture total visitation. The intern also installed 13 other counters at other preserves to begin gathering the data needed to estimate preserve visitation.
- Issued 2,105 permits for a variety of activities, including research work, public use of the backpack campground, and group hiking events.
- Completed assessment of current radio communications system, including improving coverage in preserve areas and for projected new lands. Recommendations will be presented to the Board this fall.
- Completed review of the Ranger Operations Manual for legality, consistency, and formatting that will be presented to Management and the Field Employees Association this fall.
- Completed review of Midpen's land use ordinances and bail schedule. Board review and approval of changes to the ordinance is scheduled for fall of 2020.
- Completed the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of two new positions (Interpretation Specialist and Environmental Education Specialist) in the Interpretation and Education Program, to enable the expansion and enrichment of interpretive and educational programs.

- Regraded and repaired multiple roads and trails district-wide for improved drainage and cleared downed trees.
  - Explored opportunities with regional partners to expand trail connectivity on the Peninsula through continual participation in the Peninsula Working Group Trails Committee, Bay to Sea Trail Planning Coalition, Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network Trails Committee and Dumbarton Rail Corridor Stakeholder Advisory Group.
  - Facilitated a public presentation in collaboration with partners and agencies (Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, San Francisco Bay Trail, SF Public Utilities Commission, San Mateo County Parks, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Facebook and City of Palo Alto) on regional trails within the San Francisco Peninsula.
  - Signed a letter of intent to work on the Bay-to-Sea Trail partnership project with Peninsula Open Space Trust and a planning coalition comprised of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, San Mateo County Parks, Coastal Conservancy, Coastside Land Trust, cities of Half Moon Bay and Redwood City.
- ❖ Developed a public engagement plan to develop a public access site plan for the Hawthorns property addition to the ***Windy Hill Preserve***. Retained a planning consultant to assist with project planning due to staffing shortage. Prepared a virtual tour for Board members in preparation for future activities in 2020 and 2021.
  - ❖ Implemented a District-wide strategic communications plan, including realigning public affairs departmental workflow to match Action Plan and project delivery flow and incorporating stories about how Midpen cares for public lands to help audiences understand why Midpen’s work matters.
  - ❖ Completed benchmark survey research to collect baseline data assessing public awareness of Midpen and understanding of mission, work and messaging. Results indicated that of the 58% of residents who are aware of Midpen, most view the agency favorably. Upon learning more about Midpen’s mission and work, 91% of respondents reported a favorable view of Midpen.
  - ❖ Celebrated five years of Measure AA accomplishments through communications effort that included direct mail, social media posts, fact sheets, display signage and newsletter articles.
  - ❖ Garnered record-high participation in Annual Photo Contest through successful online promotion and outreach.

#### **GENERAL/DISTRICTWIDE SUPPORT OF MISSION**

- ❖ Made significant progress on the Climate Action Plan implementation project. Purchased offsets for Midpen air travel in 2019, upgraded most office lighting to LEDs, and purchased two electric motorcycles for ranger use. Avoided approximately 54 tons of carbon dioxide emissions from employee commutes between March 16, 2020 and June 30, 2020 due to telecommuting during shelter-in-place orders. With additional actions in Fiscal Year 2020-21, Midpen is on target to meet the goal of reducing our operational footprint to 20% below 2016 baseline levels by 2022.

- ❖ Continued work to prevent and prepare for wildland fires in response to the increasing fire threat in California:
  - Released a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report, provided a public Scoping Meeting, and received public comment on the developing Wildland Fire Resiliency Program.
  - Cleared vegetation for fire safety and public access along roads and trails and maintained defensible space/fire clearance around Midpen-owned structures.
  - Received City of Palo Alto approval for the removal of fire-prone eucalyptus trees and completed the revegetation site plan at **Los Trancos Preserve**. Trees are scheduled to be removed in September 2020.
  - Secured vegetation mapping data allowing Midpen and adjacent agencies to better manage wildland-urban interface fire and fuel projects.
  - Drafted **Windy Hill** and **Pulgas Ridge preserves** Fire Response Preplans to prepare Midpen and adjacent neighbors for a fire emergency. Completed field verification for five additional preserves.
- ❖ Continued implementation of critical Financial and Operational Sustainability Model Study recommendations to enhance Midpen’s delivery of Measure AA and Vision Plan projects, including:
  - Continued development of Midpen’s Work Order and Asset Management System. The Natural Resources department is now integrated into this system, providing a streamlined approach to track California Department of Fish and Wildlife notification statuses and review of internal Midpen work. The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan barrier removal data is now centralized within the system as well, providing a simple way to track and report on progress through a user-friendly dashboard.
  - Selected and installed a Real Property database software that integrates with Midpen’s existing enterprise GIS technology. Conducted thorough data review to ensure complete and accurate mapping of all historic land acquisitions.
  - Purchased a Budget Management Software application and completed the configuration to streamline the annual budget development and management processes, and support budget collaboration between Midpen business lines, providing a robust planning and reporting tool.
  - Completed an audit of Midpen’s website content and functionality, researched new event registration system and selected a vendor for the website redesign and migration project.
  - Implemented Microsoft Teams, enabling Midpen staff to continue collaborating remotely. Teams has played a vital role in Midpen’s ability to continue functioning



- during shelter-in-place orders by facilitating virtual meetings, receiving tremendous usage.
- Redesigned SharePoint sites to increase usability and migrated multiple departments and a subset of agency files to these sites.
  - Deployed a new Electronic Wildlife Observation Form as part of a suite of enterprise GIS applications to report, review and manage wildlife observations, allowing staff to quickly respond to mountain lion sightings and other special status species reports.
- ❖ Made significant progress to bring new Midpen office facilities online for improved administrative functions and delivery of projects and services:
- Worked closely with the Board to develop and complete 90% of the construction documents for the Administrative Office project. Started permit review with the City of Los Altos. Once complete, the AO project will house a majority of staff, saving money on office rental over the long-term and providing project delivery efficiency by housing all administrative staff in one location to promote increased staff collaboration and improved communication.
  - Selected the general contractor for the South Area Field Office, a new facility that will improve response and travel times for patrol and maintenance of south area preserves. Completed 50% of the construction work, including all demolition work, foundation repairs, exterior storm drain utility work, and utilities on the interior of the building shell. All work passed initial inspections.
- ❖ Retrofitted 95% of preserve entry stiles to comply with ADA barrier width limits for improved accessibility at entry/exit locations.
- ❖ Completed the basis of design for the Mt. Umunhum Radar Tower Repairs and presented options to the Board in November 2019. The Board selected the long-term repair option and approved the development of construction documents for the selected scope of work. Design is 65% complete.
- ❖ Completed Mt. Umunhum Road Traffic Study Project, which included the installation of paved bicycle turnouts, repairs to roadside drainage scupper, curb repairs, the application of shared-lane markings, and installation of a solid double yellow centerline. Midpen crew also installed additional road safety signs and markers.
- ❖ Completed repairs to multiple Midpen-owned residences, some of which house rangers and maintenance staff who provide onsite, after-hours monitoring of the preserves. Work included completion of major repairs to the main and “old house” at the former Bergman residences in ***Russian Ridge Preserve***.
- ❖ Participated in the Management Talent Exchange Program (MTEP) by hosting an exchange participant from the County of San Mateo. MTEP is an innovative program that fosters talent by providing participants with experiences working for three months at a

different agency. The participant prepared white papers on regional trails opportunities and climate resiliency.

- ❖ Initiated website redesign project to upgrade the content management system underlying the openspace.org website and reorganize site for increased usability.
- ❖ In response to COVID-19:
  - Coordinated extensively to comply with and educate visitors on public health requirements, monitoring county health orders, and implementing preserve and facility closures as needed. Developed and installed signage and coordinated with public health officials and adjacent park agencies to keep preserves open and accessible to the greatest extent possible while ensuring public safety.
  - Assisted partner agencies in developing communications toolkit on recreating responsibly, which included public service announcements, press releases, graphics, videos and social media messaging. Created Peninsula and South Bay regional open space and parks map with partners for use on BayAreaOutdoors.org website to help promote safe recreation.
  - Developed timely and extensive safety protocols, processes, procedures and trainings to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to keep the workforce and the public safe while Midpen continued to work through the pandemic. These efforts included securing and distributing personal protective equipment and collaborating with staff to meet health guidelines set forth by federal, state and local authorities.
  - Developed a COVID-19 health check web application that streamlines daily reporting of self-health checks for staff, increasing staff and public safety during the pandemic.
  - Provided technology tools to allow Midpen staff to continue being productive at home. Conducted dozens of trainings and created numerous on-demand training videos and how-to documentation materials. Streamlined support for remote users and conducted backend system upgrades to allow remote district-wide connections. The telework experience has resulted in 100% uptime.
  - Implemented a cloud based e-signature application to electronically route and sign documents and contracts. This service allows staff to continue processing documents while telecommuting.
  - Updated the preserve guide map series to reflect current information on COVID-19 restrictions, closures, and messaging, including the addition of wide trails (6+ feet) and one-way routes to promote social distancing. The digital map files were provided to the public via Midpen's website, as well as the Avenza Maps and OuterSpatial mobile apps.

- Significantly expanded social media footprint to quickly, efficiently and effectively share safety regulations and trail condition information.

### AWARDS/GRANTS/RECOGNITION

- ❖ Completed seven successful grant applications totaling \$6,528,211:
  - \$2,895,000 from the California Natural Resources Agency in support of the Phase 2 Trail Improvements, Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation, and Ponds Restoration and Water Rights projects at ***Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
  - \$1,960,000 from the California Natural Resources Agency for the Gordon Ridge Property Land Conservation project at ***Tunitas Creek Preserve***.
  - \$700,000 from Caltrans for the Ravenswood Bay Trail Connection project at ***Ravenswood Preserve***.
  - \$301,000 from the State Coastal Conservancy in support of the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail & Staging Area Feasibility and Planning project at ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
  - \$272,211 from the County of Santa Clara in Stanford Recreation Mitigation Funds for Alpine Road Regional Trail at ***Coal Creek Preserve***.
  - \$200,000 from the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department’s Historic Grant Program for the Alma Cultural Landscape Restoration Plan at ***Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
  - \$200,000 from the California Department of Parks and Recreation’s Habitat Conservation Fund in support of the Mindego Pond Improvement project at ***Russian Ridge Preserve***.
- ❖ The Grantmaking Program distributed \$100,000 to three organizations in support of local environmental education programs.
- ❖ Received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the fourth year in a row.
- ❖ Received the Operating Budget – Excellence Award from the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers for the second time in a row (Operating Budget – Meritorious Award was received years prior).
- ❖ Applied for the Outstanding Financial Reporting Award from both the Government Finance Officers Association and the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers for the Consolidated Annual Financial Report (third year) and Popular Annual Financial Report (second year).
- ❖ Received the 2019 Municipal Information Systems Association of California Technology Innovation Award for SharePoint Project Central: An Innovative Project Management System.

- ❖ Received the prestigious California Society of Municipal Finance Officers Innovation Award for SharePoint Project Central: Implementation and Benefits of a Project Management System.
- ❖ Received the Leadership in Technology Award from the Special Districts West for Project Central and mobile technology integration.
- ❖ Received the Talent Action Program Award from the California-International City Managers Association (Cal-ICMA). This award is for overall excellence in attracting and recruiting and developing talent by the Human Resources department.

**FRONT COVER PHOTO CREDITS**

Top (L to R): Monte Bello Preserve by J. Lucas Ingram/Midpen; Stevens Creek Shoreline Nature Study Area by Gary Brauch; Russian Ridge Preserve by Kristin Moore  
Bottom (L to R): Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve by Travers Flynn; Ravenswood Preserve by Mike Kahn/Midpen; Rancho San Antonio Preserve by Douglas Croft