

# 2014 Vision Plan



IMAGINE  
*the Future of* Open Space



*The mission of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is 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.*



Photo on front page: Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve  
by Deanne Little; photo this page: Fremont Older  
Open Space Preserve by Sue Copeland

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# Foreword

We are extremely fortunate to live on the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay — a dynamic region full of ideas, innovation, and environmentalism. For 40 years, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) has quietly gone about its business, very successfully acquiring lands, growing from zero to over 62,000 acres in one of the most challenging real estate markets in the nation, providing low-intensity recreation, restoring important natural landscapes and native habitats, and cultivating a wonderful volunteer and docent program. These lands provide the venue to instill a sense of wonderment, to experience the beauty, and enjoy the healthy lifestyle that open space offers — creating a legacy of tangible and lasting value for the benefit of current and future generations.

Over the last 20 years, we've seen a major demographic shift, not just in race, ethnicity, and age, but also in values, including in what people want from open space. Within this timeframe, our region has also experienced a substantial increase in total population. Our visitation has doubled in that period of time to more than two million visits today.

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*What is the collective vision  
of the health and wellness  
of our region?*

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was to engage and inspire rich and meaningful conversation about open space with as many people and as broad an audience as possible. We began by holding community interviews — talking to people at the preserves, farmers markets, and coffee shops. We asked them what they thought and how they felt about open space. And we were delighted to learn that many of the people we connected

To better understand and adapt to our evolving role given this changing and growing population, Midpen embarked on a Vision Planning process in 2012.

One of our outreach goals

with have put a lot of thought into open space and are concerned about its future. In all, the Vision Plan we developed has the handprint of 2,200 community members and truly reflects the values and aspirations of this incredibly diverse community. Through this journey, we learned three very important lessons:

**First:** The natural world that borders our high-tech region is enormously important to the people who live in our cities and suburbs. The sense of connection that comes from walking among giant redwoods, bicycling with family along the Bay, and listening to the birds is an integral part of life on the Peninsula and in the South Bay.

**Second:** It is possible, with careful planning, to engage thousands of people in a meaningful and informative conversation about open space. Thoughtful public deliberation does lead to a better outcome.

**Third:** The public's expectations of their open space lands are much greater than we had ever realized. They want more trails and greater access, they want critical land preserved — especially our iconic redwood forests — and they want us to enhance stewardship of the land and restore biodiversity.

All of these efforts have led to the vision for the future of open space. The expanded outreach and communication efforts that grew out of the Vision Plan were not part of a one-time effort, but rather part of a new way of communicating with the public and staying connected with the community strength and capacity that surrounds us.

*Here's to the future  
of open space!*



*Stephen E. Abbors*

Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager

# Executive Summary

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) actively preserves a regional greenbelt of open space land, protects the natural environment, and provides opportunities for public recreation and environmental education for the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay, as well as the broader Bay Area region. Midpen, like many other agencies, is challenged to further its mission within staffing and funding constraints. In response to this challenge, Midpen set out in 2012 to chart a course for the next 40 years and beyond with *Imagine the Future of Open Space*, an 18-month visioning process designed to help Midpen focus, inspire, and coordinate open space conservation and management on the San Francisco Peninsula, San Mateo Coast, and South Bay regions. This Vision Plan articulates the core values of the region about open space — the results of an extensive process that provided a current look at the values and opinions of community stakeholders, combined with the results of extensive scientific study.

## Engaging the Community

To ensure that the vision was informed and supported by diverse community viewpoints, the Vision Plan was developed through a robust public engagement process that created opportunities for increasingly focused conversations about important issues. In each phase, Midpen used a series of outreach and engagement strategies.

The purpose of the engagement was to share information about Midpen's mission and work, and in turn, receive meaningful and productive input from partners and the public. The various approaches to engagement built upon one another, resulting in a snowball effect that developed partnerships while building broader networks of public involvement and participation.

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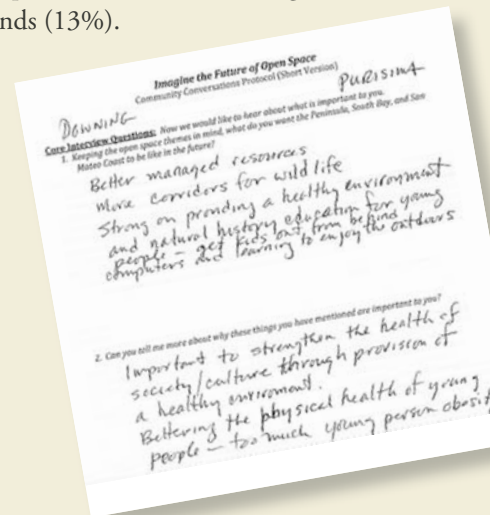
*The Vision Plan offers a balanced foundation for Midpen to make difficult choices in the future about what to emphasize and how to allocate resources*

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The planning process was guided by a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) — a volunteer group of 32 stakeholders, community leaders, and representatives from partner organizations, agencies, and the local community — who met monthly to help Midpen refine each Vision Plan component. At the outset of the planning process, the public, CAC, and Midpen's board and staff were interviewed about their aspirations for the region; their responses were then used to develop the Vision Plan themes and goals. These, in turn, guided the scientific analyses that led to the characterization of the Vision Plan Area and the development of priority actions.

From over 700 conversations with members of the public, we learned that people care deeply about open space, and share the following core values:

- Desire for outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles (29%);
- Enjoyment of natural, cultural, and scenic landscapes (25%);
- Concern for healthy plants, animals, and waterways (19%);
- Appreciation for learning, and time spent with friends and family (14%); and
- Importance of viable working lands (13%).



## Community Engagement Strategies

- Interviews with individuals and small groups using community conversations to identify aspirations and goals
- An interactive website to obtain input on goals and priority actions
- Consultation with partner organizations and agencies regarding their priorities and goals
- Five public workshops at venues throughout the Vision Plan Area to prioritize the goals and priority actions
- Monthly meetings with a Community Advisory Committee to obtain feedback throughout the planning process
- Two Midpen board study sessions to rank the priority actions into two tiers

The interview data and the hundreds of website discussion topics provided insight into the public’s opinions and hopes for the future of open space. Based upon what we learned from the public, the Vision Plan began to focus on five main themes as a framework for planning that collectively capture the diverse conservation values of open space in the region.

## Integrating Public Input with Science



While Midpen was gathering input from the community, it was simultaneously completing a thorough scientific resource study to characterize the Vision Plan Area. Staff and local experts assembled and critically evaluated biological, historical, cultural, visual, agricultural, and recreational conditions within the Vision Plan Area.

These studies identified many opportunities for conservation and management strategies that could result in long-term positive impacts on our region:

- The Vision Plan Area supports tremendous natural resources, including old-growth redwood forests, streams with rare ocean-going fish, and species with large home ranges, including mountain lions. The region features critical landscape linkages that are essential to maintaining connectivity within the Peninsula and between the Santa Cruz Mountains and adjacent mountain ranges. This connectivity, along with the varied topography and abundant cooler, moister microclimates, will help the region’s species and ecosystems be resilient to a future hotter, and likely drier, climate.
- The Vision Plan Area provides opportunities for enhanced outdoor recreation. These opportunities include increasing access to existing preserved lands, enhancing capacity of existing high-use open space preserves, and promoting new regional trail connections to neighboring parks and preserves as well as completing trails along the bayfront, ridgeline, and coastline.

- The Vision Plan Area provides additional opportunities for learning about and appreciating the local environment and natural history. Emphasizing education centers, nature play opportunities, and interpretive programs at Midpen open space preserves along the foothills and bayfront could provide close-to-home open space opportunities for communities in our region where access to preserves is a real and ongoing challenge. Midpen could potentially offer expanded and enriched experiences for community members in conjunction with partners such as local nonprofits, schools, and other public agencies.
- The Vision Plan Area is home to numerous beautiful, iconic places and important reminders of our local history. Mount Umunhum, the San Mateo coast, and towering redwood forests provide stunning vistas away from the stresses of urban life. Native American sites and historic estate residences educate about past lifestyles and foster a sense of place. Many of these iconic locations and cultural features are not currently protected or interpreted.
- The Vision Plan Area has produced agricultural products for the greater Bay Area and beyond for several centuries. However the overall viability of agriculture is threatened. More than 5,000 acres of farmland, including approximately 2,200 acres of prime farmland have been taken out of production within the Vision Plan Area since 1990, and the market value of crops has declined 63%. Access to water and a reliable water supply are big challenges to viability, as is the availability of farm labor. Limited availability of grazing lands, degraded ranch-based infrastructure, and lack of local animal processing facilities are problems. Growing recognition that grazing animals provide important ecosystem services may provide an opportunity to make more land available for grazing.

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Themes: **Healthy Nature**

Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living

Enriched Experiences

Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes

Viable Working Lands

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## Setting Goals, and Determining How to Meet Them



For each theme, the Vision Plan includes a series of goals that state the desired outcomes. The themes and goals were based on Midpen’s mission statement and adopted policies, the results of the scientific assessment for the region, and input from the public, Community Advisory Committee and Midpen Board of Directors.

Once the themes and goals had been determined, Midpen staff developed

54 major open space projects (“priority actions”) that balanced the needs of the public with the sensitivities and protection of the local ecosystem. Since each priority is made up of multiple actions, they can also be characterized as “priority action portfolios,” with several discrete projects identified under each portfolio. These projects include protecting forests, creating trails, restoring streams, and opening new preserves — and reflect the projects, regional strategies, and site-specific actions needed to achieve the goals.

## Choosing What Is Most Important

To better understand the public’s preferences, Midpen held five, three-hour regional public workshops in parallel with a community engagement website, to identify and choose the most important goals and priority actions. The workshops and study sessions were attended by over 400 people and the website attracted 600 participants, as a result of a broad outreach effort involving flyers, news media coverage, outreach to community groups, and other outlets. The participants learned about conservation goals and priority actions, and then rated them and viewed the aggregated responses of the group in the moment. They considered their own priorities and values, and many of them explored tradeoffs and different perspectives through small group conversations and online comments.

*The Top 25 priority actions represent the natural landscapes where the return on investment is highest, and public interest is the greatest.*

After tabulating the community input, Midpen staff split the priority actions into two tiers reflecting both public input and the effectiveness of the actions at achieving the Vision Plan goals — the Top 25 most critical and effective priority actions (Tier 1) and the additional 29 priority actions (Tier 2). The Midpen Board of Directors used these technical findings and community input in their decision to approve the final Vision Plan priority actions.

## The Guide for the Future

The priority actions provide Midpen and its partners with an important high-level guide — not a specific prescription — for the next 40 years. Over a 20-year period, Midpen will focus on the Top 25 priority actions (Tier 1); Tier 2 represents longer-term opportunities.

The priority actions will occur throughout the Vision Plan Area, including actions at Midpen’s existing open space preserves. By directing resources to the priority actions, Midpen and others have the best opportunity to meet the goals of the Vision Plan. This integrated approach to conservation focuses on areas where open space protection can accomplish multiple objectives, including protection of forests and streams, outdoor recreation, availability of beautiful views, and rural scenery.

The Vision Plan establishes a long-term, community-driven path to guide future work by Midpen to fulfill its overarching mission. It is a living document that fully integrates community need with a comprehensive resource analysis that can serve as a model for both civic engagement and open space planning for years to come.

### The Top 25 priority actions will:

- Protect redwood forests
- Ensure clean water and salmon habitat
- Add over 200 miles of new trails
- Open 20,000 acres of land
- Provide 13 new staging and parking areas
- Provide outdoor education opportunities at 13 locations
- Preserve over 50,000 acres of open space
- Enhance wetlands and ponds for rare wildlife at 10 open space preserves
- Improve ranches and rangelands at 4 open space preserves
- Protect wildlife corridors



# IMAGINE the Future of YOUR Open Space

## Why a Vision Plan?

Midpen set out to chart a course for the next 40 years and beyond with *Imagine the Future of Open Space*, an 18-month visioning process designed to help focus, inspire, and coordinate open space conservation and management on the San Francisco Peninsula, San Mateo Coast, and South Bay regions.

### 1 Community Advisory Committee



A 32 member Community Advisory Committee was formed representing stakeholders to track and guide the Vision Plan process.

### 2 Community Conversations

Midpen staff and volunteers set out to gain input from the public on their vision of open space by conducting interviews on Midpen lands, at community gatherings, and on the web.

Over **700** in-person interviews conducted

"What is your vision of open space?"

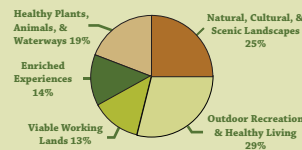
"Trails and open space allow me to get out of the city, recharge and enjoy creation."



What we heard



#### Themes in Community Conversations



### 3 Conservation & Recreation Needs

To complement the community conversations, Midpen researched conservation needs and recreational opportunities within the Vision Plan area.

#### Global Biodiversity Hotspots



### 4 Future Open Space Actions Throughout Midpen

The public input and research were used to develop a list of 54 actions to achieve the community's vision of open space on the Peninsula.



### 5 Public Participation & Action Prioritization

7 public workshops and hearings  
Over **400** attendees  
Over **600** online participants



### 6 Top 25 Future Open Space Priority Actions

Input from the public workshops and web polls were used to identify the Top 25. In February 2014, the Midpen Board of Directors approved the final Vision Plan actions and their prioritization. Midpen plans to focus initial efforts on completing these Top 25, as the next step towards your vision of the future of open space lands.

To explore the individual Top 25 Future Open Space Actions visit: [www.openspace.org/vision](http://www.openspace.org/vision)



#### The Top 25 will:

Add **200 miles+** of new trails  
Open **20,000+ acres**  
Protect **Redwood Forests**  
Ensure **clean water & salmon habitat**



[www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org)



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Box 1.1: Mission

The mission of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is 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.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) actively preserves a regional greenbelt of open space land, protects the natural environment, and provides opportunities for public recreation and environmental education for the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay, as well as the broader Bay Area region.

Midpen, like many other agencies, is challenged to further its mission (Box 1.1) within staffing and funding constraints. To address these challenges, Midpen's 2011 Strategic Plan called for a Vision Plan that would:

1. Prioritize lands and activities within District boundaries for conservation, public access, landscape restoration, and agriculture, to maximize the beneficial impact given the available resources;
2. Enhance regional collaboration to leverage the strengths of other conservation and partner organizations;
3. Build public support to create a common vision; and
4. Generate wide support for future funding efforts to enhance financial and staffing resources to successfully create greater balance between the three parts of Midpen's mission.

In response, Midpen initiated a planning process to guide Midpen's work for the next 40 years and beyond. Between August 2012 and February 2014, Midpen sponsored *Imagine the Future of Open Space*, a multi-phase, community values-based and science-informed planning process to promote Midpen's mission.

This Vision Plan articulates the core values of the region about open space — the results of an extensive community engagement process

that offers a solid look at the values and opinions of community stakeholders, combined with the results of extensive scientific study. It provides a balanced foundation for Midpen to make difficult choices in the future about what to emphasize and how to allocate resources. This foundation is intended to be flexible, allowing dynamic responses to the ever-changing world around us.

The Vision Plan Area is approximately 371,000-acre area that comprises Midpen's jurisdiction and sphere of influence, including the approximately 62,000 acres of existing Midpen-owned open space preserves, as shown in Figure 1.1.

## Purpose of this Report

This report consolidates this community feedback, along with analysis findings, and priority actions prepared by Midpen during development of the Vision Plan. This document describes the step-by-step planning process that was used; summarizes the community feedback received; presents the findings of a thorough scientific resource study that characterizes open space in the region; outlines the plan's goals in five themes; highlights Midpen's priority actions; and finally, discusses next steps. The Vision Plan is the first of a three-part series that resulted from Midpen's planning process: the Vision Plan itself, a Conservation Atlas, and an Appendices containing the work plan, planning and analysis reports, and community engagement reports.

## How the Vision Plan Will Be Used

Midpen has gained information about the community and the environment that will be useful to the board of directors, staff, stakeholders, and others as Midpen moves forward to carry out the vision for the future. Many of the technical reports and memos provide information that will help inform future decisions, or provide the jumping-off point for future assessments to guide implementation of the plan.

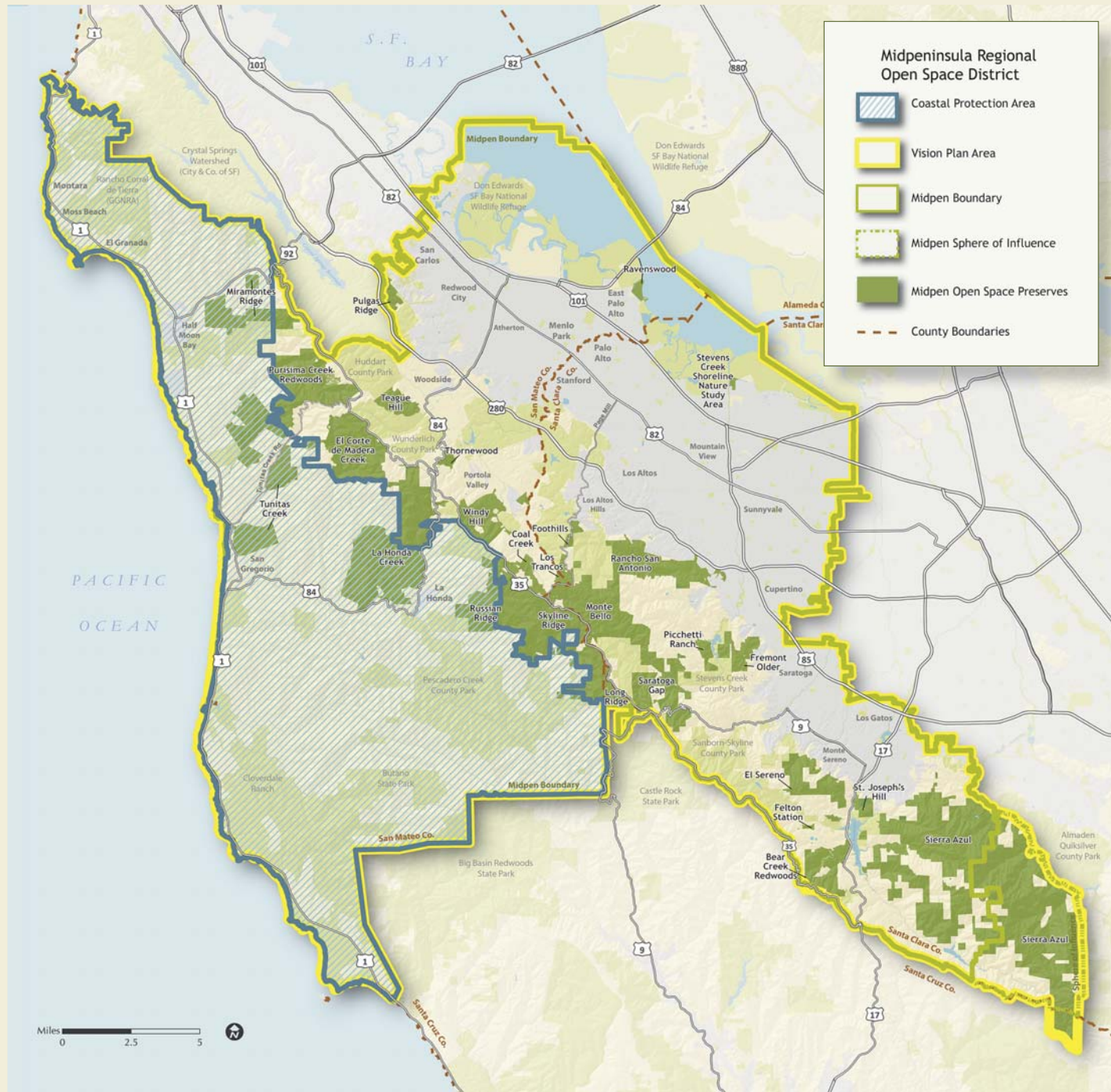


Figure 1.1: Vision Plan Area

# Chapter 2: Vision Plan Development

The Vision Plan was developed through a step-wise process, during which Midpen integrated community input with results from scientific assessments and planning analyses to develop a series of Vision Plan components, culminating with the priority actions (Figure 2.1).

## Community Engagement

### Vision Plan Process



To ensure that the vision was informed and supported by diverse community viewpoints, the Vision Plan was developed through a robust public engagement process. This method created opportunities for increasingly focused conversations about important issues, through the five steps of the “SHEDD Model”: Getting Started, Hearing the voices, Enriching the conversation, Deliberating, and Deciding. In each phase, Midpen used a series of outreach and engagement strategies (Box 2.1).

The purpose of the engagement was to share information about Midpen’s mission and work, and in turn, elicit meaningful and productive input from partners and the public. The various approaches to engagement built upon one another, resulting in a snowball effect that developed partnerships while building broader networks of public involvement and participation.

At the outset of the planning process, the public, Midpen’s board, the Community Advisory Committee, and staff were interviewed about their aspirations for the region, which led to the development of the Vision Plan themes and goals. These, in turn, guided the scientific analyses that led to the characterization of the Vision Plan Area and the development of the priority actions. Midpen then held a series of public workshops and used an interactive website

to obtain community input on the goals and priority actions. Midpen’s board then considered the scientific information and community input to select the final 54 Vision Plan Priority Actions, and to rank them into two tiers to reflect public input and their effectiveness at achieving the Vision Plan goals (discussed further in Chapter 4).

During this process, Midpen also used social media to grow audiences through the social networks of partner agencies and engaged residents. Within eight months, Facebook “likes” and Twitter “followers” grew by 41%.

During the deliberation phase of the vision planning process, more than 1,000 members of the public actively engaged with Midpen and its work. They learned about the themes and goals that guide decision-making and the kinds of actions that might be taken to achieve the goals. They considered their own priorities and values in relation to Midpen’s mission, and many of them explored different perspectives through small group conversations and online comments. And ultimately, they expressed their priorities through rating systems that invited them to consider tradeoffs and to see how others’ priorities compared to their own.

### Box 2.1: Community Engagement Strategies

- Interviews with individuals and small groups using community conversations to identify aspirations and goals
- An interactive website to obtain input on goals and priority actions
- Consultation with partner organizations and agencies regarding their priorities and goals
- Five public workshops at venues throughout the Vision Plan Area to prioritize goals and priority actions
- Monthly meetings with a Community Advisory Committee to obtain feedback throughout the planning process
- Two Midpen Board study sessions to rank the priority actions into two tiers

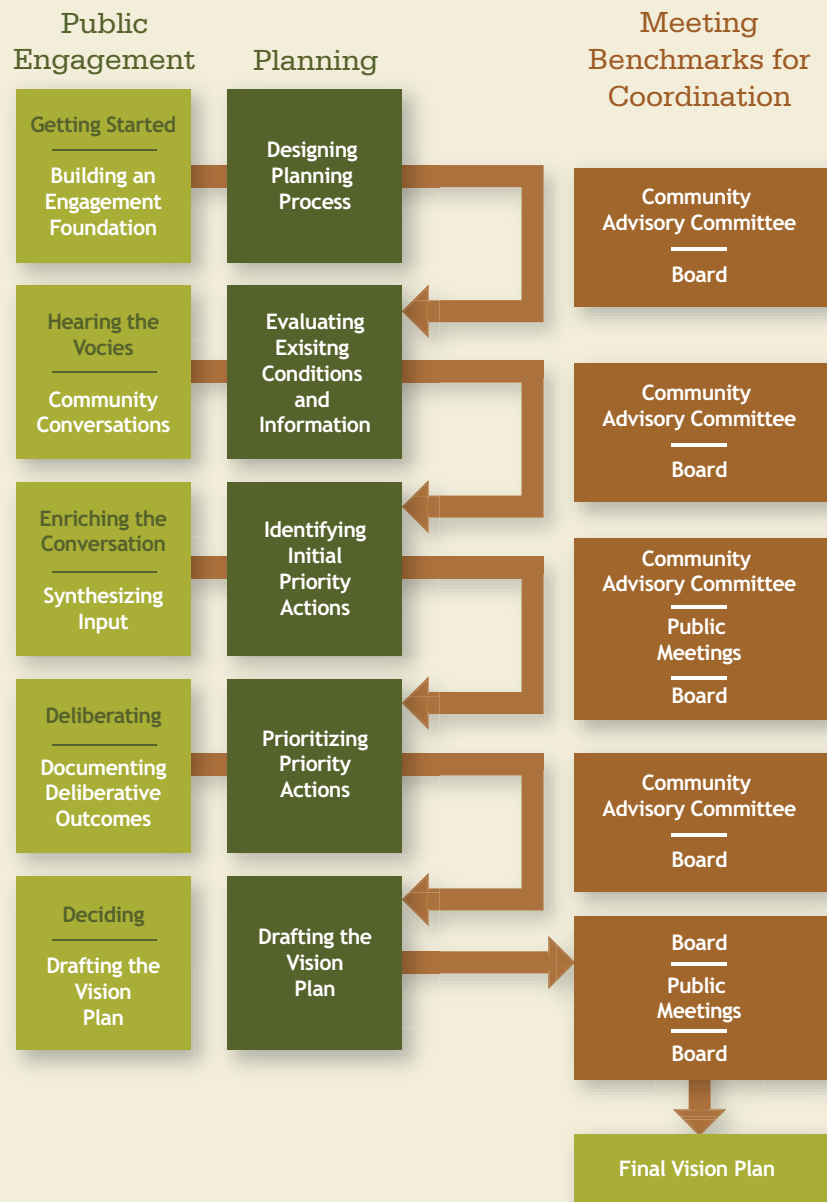


Figure 2.1: Vision Plan Development Process



**Members of the CAC with Midpen Board and Staff**

Shelley Lewis

### Box 2.2: Community Advisory Committee Representatives

- Local City and County Elected Officials
- Conservation/Environmental Nonprofit Representatives
- Amah Mutsun Tribe
- Hikers
- Equestrians
- Mountain Bikers
- Neighborhood Associations
- Preserve Neighbors
- Community Leaders

CAC representative names are listed in the *Acknowledgments*.

Left to right: front row: Ann WaltonSmith, Casey Hiatt (staff), Lisa Bankosh (staff), Steve Wood, Kirk Lenington (staff), Faye Brophy, David Sanguinetti (staff), Marc Landgraf, Pete Siemens (Board). Back row: Curt Riffle (Board), Larry Watson, Brian Malone (staff), Chris Overington, Paul Heiple, Michael Newburn (staff), Steve Abbors (staff), Mike Williams (staff), Lennie Roberts, Renée Fitzsimons (staff), Robb Courtney, Lynn Jackson, Elaina Cuzick (staff), Don Weden, Valentin Lopez, Ruth Waldauer, Jered Lawson  
(For full CAC membership list see pages 138-139)

## Community Advisory Committee

The planning process was guided by a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) — a volunteer group of 32 stakeholders, community leaders, and representatives from partner organizations, agencies, and the local community (Box 2.2) — who met at approximately monthly intervals to help Midpen refine each Vision Plan component.

The CAC provided recommendations and feedback directly to Midpen’s board of directors at all stages of the Vision Plan process.

## Open Space Assessments

Concurrent with community engagement efforts, Midpen conducted assessments of the Vision Plan Area. The purpose of these assessments was to identify and characterize the open space values of the area — the natural, scenic, cultural, recreational, and agricultural characteristics of open space within the entire Vision Plan Area—and determine which

lands are most important to meet Midpen’s mission and reflect the community’s interests.

To conduct this work, Midpen assembled a multidisciplinary team consisting of experts in ecology, forest management, agriculture, recreation, and cultural resources. These experts worked closely with Midpen staff to perform the analytical planning tasks in close coordination with the community engagement process. To ensure the Vision Plan built upon existing knowledge, this team conferred with Midpen staff and compiled available information, including geographic information system (GIS) data and prior plans for the region and Midpen preserves. This information was used to describe the existing open space conditions, as well as identify potential opportunities and locations for conservation, stewardship, and public access. These assessments provided the basis for selecting initial priority actions intended to achieve the goals. The Appendices include a compilation of the reports prepared during the open space assessment process.

| Planning Phase  | Community Engagement Approaches   | Open Space Analysis Methods  | Vision Plan Components   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Phase 1:<br/>Charting a Path for Successful Planning<br/>(July 2012 – January 2013)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a comprehensive community engagement and public participation plan.</li> <li>• Formed the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which then reviewed the plan for community engagement and scientific assessments.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a detailed work plan identifying the analytical planning approaches, including questions, existing data, and steps to fill data gaps.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a community engagement strategy and work plan for scientific assessments. (Appendix A).</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Phase 2:<br/>Develop Vision Plan Themes and Goals<br/>(January – September 2013)</b></p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted 725 “community conversations” interviews in 30 locations within Midpen preserves and community venues (e.g., farmers markets), in which people were asked questions about their vision for open space.</li> <li>• Obtained input about the vision for the region via the project-specific community engagement website, which was visited by approximately 1,800 people.</li> <li>• Characterized public input to date according to five main themes, to identify prominent topics and commonalities.</li> <li>• Convened the CAC to review public aspirations and discuss implications for the themes and goals.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesized available information about the region’s open space values, including natural, cultural, and scenic resources, working lands, and recreation and outdoor education opportunities.</li> <li>• Evaluated the existing conditions, and identified conservation opportunities and constraints for the open space values in the five themes. This was used to inform the development of the priority actions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified five Vision Plan themes that address the benefits of open space (Table 3.2).</li> <li>• Listed prominent topics and representative quotes for each theme and overall, which provided an initial indication of public priorities (Appendix B).</li> <li>• Identified goals for each theme, and overarching principles to guide all work (Table 3.2 and Box 3.2).</li> <li>• Created nine subregions, to facilitate regional discussions and focused analyses (Box 3.3 and Figure 3.5).</li> <li>• Developed detailed reports characterizing open space values for each theme, to inform land protection, resource management, public access, and working lands protection. (Appendices C – F).</li> </ul> |

Table 2.1: Summary of Vision Plan Process (part 1)

| Planning Phase  | Community Engagement Approaches  | Open Space Analysis Methods  | Vision Plan Components   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Phase 3:<br/>Identify Priority Actions to Achieve the Goals (October – December 2013)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Held five public workshops throughout the Vision Plan Area that were attended by 234 participants who rated the goals and priority actions through key-pad voting.</li> <li>• Asked the public to rate the goals and priority actions on the Vision Plan website, which facilitated an online dialogue about these components.</li> <li>• Reviewed the public input on the goals and priority actions with the CAC, and asked them to rate the top 39 priority actions identified by the public.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convened Theme Teams comprised of Midpen staff and local experts, who developed the initial priority actions.</li> <li>• Scored the priority actions based on the number of goals promoted within each theme and overall, and evaluated their geographic distribution.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified 54 highly-rated priority actions in support of land preservation, resource management, public recreation, interpretation/outdoor education, and working land conservation, characterized according to the goals they would promote and mapped according to the subregion (Chapter 4).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Phase 4:<br/>Prioritize the Priority Actions (December 2013 – January 2014)</b></p>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midpen Board of Directors held two study sessions to discuss the priority actions and obtain additional public input.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classified the 54 priority actions into two tiers (Chapter 4), based on their level of public support, their effectiveness at promoting the goals, and their location.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of 54 final priority actions, selected for maximum effectiveness and community support (Chapter 5), which Midpen will implement with partners over the next 40 years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 Tier 1 actions would be the immediate, near-term focus for Midpen; and</li> <li>• 29 Tier 2 actions represent long-term priorities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

Table 2.1: Summary of Vision Plan Process (part 2)

# Chapter 3: Key Findings

## Public Engagement Findings

### Box 3.1: Community Conversation Questions

- Keeping open space in mind, what do you want the Peninsula, South Bay, and San Mateo Coast to be like in the future?
- How might open space contribute to the future you imagine?
- Can you tell me more about why these things you have mentioned are important to you?
- What are the most important actions that the District or others could take to move us toward the kind of future you want?

The Vision Plan’s community engagement efforts during the second phase of the Vision Plan process (April – June 2013) used a “community conversations” strategy — a flexible and consistent way to gather people’s thoughts, ideas, aspirations, and values in a way that fosters two-way engagement, supports relationship-building, and complements scientific polling. Community members were asked four open-ended questions (Box 3.1) designed to elicit thoughts on what is important to them as they envision the future of open space.

Responses were collected in three ways. First, approximately 75 trained student interns from San Jose and San Francisco state universities conducted interviews

through referrals, personal contacts, and at various community events, like Earth Day celebrations and farmers markets. Second, Midpen rangers conducted interviews with visitors at most Midpen preserves. Conversations were held at over 30 locations in the Vision Plan Area. Third, an online public participation platform was employed to elicit responses to the questions and to encourage participants to engage each other by responding to and voting on others’ ideas (Figure 3.1). One of the online discussion topics, titled “Looking to the Future” had over 1,200 comments and 4,100 views. Altogether, Midpen’s project website pages were viewed 38,000 times.

Midpen also used social media to grow audiences through the social networks of partner agencies and engaged residents.





All methods engaged diverse and broadly distributed participants. The community conversations reached over 700 people, including more than 200 people at Midpen preserves. In addition to the conversations represented above, the Vision Plan website reported over 17,000 page views by almost 1,800 visitors, including 600 active (signed-in) participants. The gender distribution was roughly evenly split. A wide array of age groups participated, with greatest numbers from the 18–55-year-old range. Although Caucasian/European participants were somewhat overrepresented, participants were still ethnically diverse. Within eight months, Midpen’s Facebook “Likes” and Twitter “Followers” grew by 41%, which further engaged people in the Vision Plan and the work of Midpen.

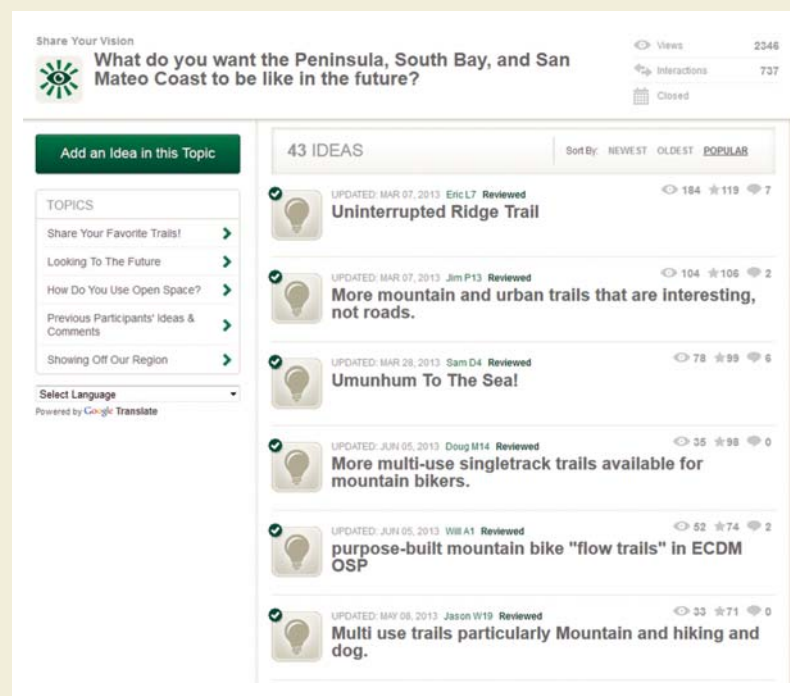


Figure 3.1: Excerpts from Vision Plan Website

The interview data and the hundreds of website discussion topics provided valuable insight into the public’s opinions and hopes for the future of open space. Based upon what was heard, the Vision Plan began to focus on five main themes that collectively capture the diverse conservation values of open space in the region. The conversations were fairly well balanced amongst the Vision Plan themes, as shown in Figure 3.2. However, the *Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living* theme came up more frequently than the others. Regardless of theme, the top four most commonly mentioned topics were recreational activities, healthy living for people, additional preservation/stewardship, and scenic opportunities/benefits. The top two most commonly mentioned themes were mentioned in more than half of the conversations.

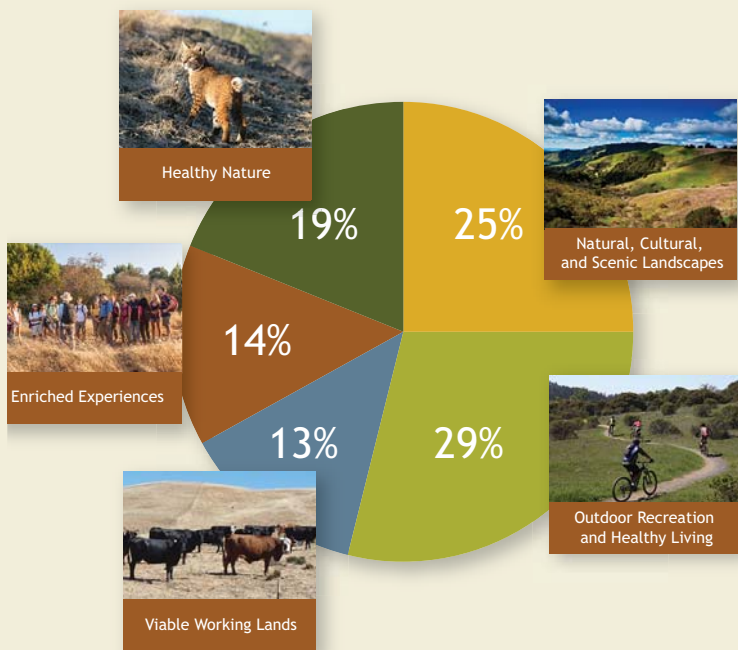


Figure 3.2: Percent of Topics Raised during Community Conversations within Each Theme



| Theme   | Prominent Topics  | Other Frequent Comments  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Healthy Plants, Animals, and Waterways</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iconic species or habitats</li> <li>• Healthy natural systems</li> <li>• Additional preservation, conservation, and stewardship</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing plants and animals is an important aspect of the recreational experience</li> <li>• Clean water and clean air</li> <li>• Protecting natural open space from development</li> </ul> |
| <b>Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational activities</li> <li>• Increased public access</li> <li>• Healthy living for people</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for more hiking and mountain biking trails</li> <li>• More regional trails</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Enriched Experiences</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, outreach, and community service</li> <li>• Healthy living for people</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding new ways to communicate about the benefits of open space</li> <li>• The importance of educating people about nature</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic opportunities and benefits</li> <li>• Additional preservation, conservation, and stewardship</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appreciation of beauty</li> <li>• Desire for escape and refuge</li> <li>• Need to preserve scenic beauty</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Viable Working Lands</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture, food systems, and agricultural lifestyle</li> <li>• Healthy living for people</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appreciation for the area's agricultural heritage</li> <li>• Food systems and its relationship to healthy people</li> <li>• Importance of working lands to providing jobs</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.1: Summary of Community Conversations



Richard Adler



*imagine the future of open space...*

## *HEALTHY NATURE*

*voices of the community:*

*"These spaces are abundant with nature's true treasures.  
We should see them as jewels, not for sale."*

*"Nothing is more important to me than  
keeping our water system clean,  
animals free, and plants safe from foreign weeds."*

*"We need to look at the question; 'Are we saving the land the right way?'"*

*"Improve water quality and balance water use  
so the Coastal creeks can support fish again!"*

*"Yes please! We need salmon and steelhead again!!!"*

*"Yes, yes, stream restoration should be a high priority."*



John Kesselring



Jack Owicki

*"We need connected lands for plants and animals to thrive."*

*"I like to run through natural preserves, and seeing  
plants and animals is part of that experience"*

Randy Weber



*imagine the future of open space...*

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION & HEALTHY LIVING**

*voices of the community:*

*“I love walking around the natural beauty and more trails would be a plus.”*

*“I’d love to hike more, but not having a car makes it hard to do. I wish there were means of public transportation that could take you to these lovely hiking trails.”*

*“I would love to see the Bay Area Ridge Trail extend uninterrupted from Montara in the North to Mt Umunhum in the South.”*

*“Public access facilitates personal connections with the land that are critical for people to have a relationship with nature.”*

*“Open space is the best way to exercise outdoors and catch fresh air while hiking or running or cycling, especially after work.”*

*“I think there is a delicate balance between providing access, and the health of the land. If there is too much access the land will be negatively impacted.”*

*“Trails and open space allow me to get out of the city, recharge, and enjoy creation.”*

Strether Smith

Anne Sophie Gaudet



*imagine the future of open space...*

## **ENRICHED EXPERIENCES**

*voices of the community:*

*"Let's get people connected to the land, so they know why it's important."*

*"Please increase interpretive centers and signage!"*

*"If we start educating youth today about the benefits of the open space, they can be the leaders and advocates for the future."*

*"There needs to be more outreach to universities; even college students do not know much about open space."*

*"Education is where the District should begin.,  
Many people are uneducated about the lands and can't appreciate them."*

Karl Gohl

*"I didn't even know these places you're mentioning existed, why is that? Is it really anyone's fault or just my own?"*



*"As a first grade teacher, bringing students to a working farm close by would be an unforgettable experience."*





imagine the future of open space...

## NATURAL, CULTURAL & SCENIC LANDSCAPES

voices of the community

*"I am a writer, and I find inspiration in tranquility, peace, and silence like the open space gives. It's miles from the busy city, it's like a whole new world. I find it's beauty, scenery, and history a kickoff for my poetry.*

*It's a real joy to leave the city life, for just a moment, and meditate here. I find serenity, sublime, and beauty in these green scenes."*

*"You never run out of beautiful places to go here!"*

*"Most people I know who visit our preserved open spaces appreciate the stability of them - there is comfort in returning to a place and seeing it (relatively) unchanged year on year, decade on decade... This holds true also for the coastal landscapes, even the pastoral, rural working lands. Coastsiders (even those of us who only recently rooted here) want the backdrop of our lives to maintain..."*

Charles Tu

*"I'd like to see them preserved as much as possible - particularly those areas that hold some significance - some historic value."*

*"Also being able to lift my eyes up to the open and beautiful hills from the busy freeways keeps me sane because it brings back memories of wonderful, peaceful times and makes me smile. Thanks for keeping the open spaces open and safe from urban sprawl."*

Randy Weber



*imagine the future of open space...*

## **VIABLE WORKING LANDS**

*voices of the community:*

*"Agriculture is healthy for the community and healthy for the land."*

*"Let's find a way to connect the food grown in our area to the people that live here."*

*"It is healthy to have people working lands. By having ag operations, it decreases trespassing, vandalism, and growing marijuana. It all works together."*

*"Working land is just as important to our world as the parks and reservoirs."*

*"There should be productive use of land however, farming should not hinder the preservation of that land for the animals living there."*

Cat Allen



## Planning Framework

### Themes and Goals

The themes and goals were developed based upon Midpen’s mission statement and adopted policies, the results of the scientific assessment of the region (described in the next section), and community, Community Advisory Committee, and Midpen Board of Directors input. For each theme, the Vision Plan includes a series of goals that state the desired outcomes.



Figure 3.4: Planning Framework

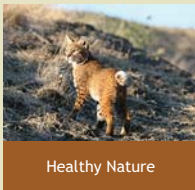
| Theme   | Goals   |
|---|---|
|  <p>Healthy Nature</p> | <p><b>Healthy Nature:</b> Taking care of the land, air, water, and soil so that plants and animals thrive and nature’s benefits are provided to people.</p>   |
| <b>Stewardship</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore the natural environment, control invasive plants and animals, and limit the spread of pathogens</li> <li>• Promote natural ecosystem processes</li> <li>• Prevent or address erosion and pollution</li> <li>• Protect watersheds and restore stream flow to improve habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul> |
| <b>Biodiversity</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect large contiguous areas of intact habitat that represent the Peninsula and South Bay’s full mosaic of natural communities</li> <li>• Conserve sensitive species and special natural communities</li> <li>• Increase adaptation to climate change and increase carbon storage</li> </ul>                       |
| <b>Connectivity</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase connectivity between protected areas to support natural wildlife movement patterns</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.2: Vision Plan Themes and Goals (part 1)

| Theme  | Goals  |
|--|--|
|  <p data-bbox="449 423 642 472">Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living</p> | <p data-bbox="730 354 1612 418"><b>Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living:</b> Providing accessible open space lands for recreation and outdoor exercise in a natural setting.</p>  |
| <p data-bbox="449 526 590 623"><b>Expand Appropriate Access</b></p>  | <ul data-bbox="730 526 1797 732" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new public access or improve access to inaccessible areas with trails and staging area improvements</li> <li>• Increase access close to where more people live, and provide access that minimizes the use of cars</li> <li>• Provide ecologically sensitive access to exceptional natural features or vistas</li> <li>• Provide regional, long distance trails that connect open space to communities</li> </ul> |
| <p data-bbox="449 764 611 829"><b>Ensure Compatibility</b></p>   | <ul data-bbox="730 764 1598 927" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access compatible with resource protection and regulatory constraints</li> <li>• Avoid concentration of use</li> <li>• Reduce or eliminate safety hazards and promote safe use of the preserves</li> <li>• Address ongoing management and maintenance</li> </ul>   |
| <p data-bbox="449 964 600 1029"><b>Expand Opportunity</b></p>  | <ul data-bbox="730 964 1661 1029" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the diversity of visitors</li> <li>• Accommodate a wide variety of visitors of all abilities, ages, ethnicities, and interests</li> </ul>  |
|  <p data-bbox="449 1206 642 1255">Enriched Experiences</p>              | <p data-bbox="730 1138 1598 1203"><b>Enriched Experiences:</b> Learning about and appreciating the local environment, as well as connecting people with nature and with each other.</p>  |
| <p data-bbox="449 1312 558 1344"><b>Diversity</b></p>  | <ul data-bbox="730 1312 1906 1393" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creatively reach more people, including those with decreased mobility, and increase the diversity of our visitors</li> <li>• Expand youth programming and outreach through partnerships</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.2: Vision Plan Themes and Goals (part 2)

| Theme   | Goals   |
|---|---|
| <b>Improved Visitor Experience</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide facilities/areas where families can engage safely with nature</li> <li>• Emphasize a variety of natural learning environments</li> <li>• Increase use of technology to introduce and connect people to nature</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Volunteer Stewardship</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase support for stewardship and open space conservation</li> <li>• Increase technology use to promote open space stewardship</li> <li>• Encourage hands-on stewardship and citizen science activities on Midpen lands</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Knowledge, Understanding, and Appreciation</b>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember and honor community heritage and past ways of life through activities, programming, and projects</li> <li>• Interpret how natural and cultural resources relate to people's current lives</li> <li>• Increase preserve-specific interpretation projects and programs that emphasize the protection of natural and cultural resources</li> </ul> |
|  | <p><b>Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes:</b> Conserving the area's scenery and rich history and providing places for escape and quiet enjoyment.</p>   |
| <b>Quiet Enjoyment of Nature</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for people to experience, enjoy, and interpret the beauty and tranquility of natural open space</li> <li>• Increase access to quiet places to enjoy vistas, encourage connections with nature, and take refuge from urban life</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Sense of Place</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a sense of place by protecting and increasing access to locally significant, iconic natural or cultural features</li> <li>• Preserve the scenic backdrop and designated scenic corridors, emphasizing the view from major roadways and parklands</li> <li>• Preserve the character and scenic qualities of the coast and rural areas</li> </ul> |

Table 3.2: Vision Plan Themes and Goals (part 3)

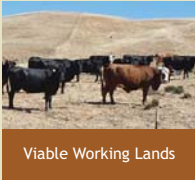
| Theme   | Goals  |
|---|--|
| <b>Steward Many Cultures</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect immediately at-risk, culturally significant resources and promote their responsible stewardship</li> <li>• Promote partnerships that preserve and/or enhance cultural resources</li> <li>• Increase interpretation of cultural resources</li> </ul>   |
|  | <p><b>Viable Working Lands:</b> Protecting viable working lands that reflect our heritage, and provide food and jobs.</p>  |
| <b>Support Agriculture and Local Food Producers</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve farms and rangelands by working cooperatively with partners and the agricultural community</li> <li>• Prioritize agricultural lands at the urban edge and those currently in agricultural use</li> <li>• Promote large contiguous blocks of land in agricultural use</li> <li>• Support the region's agricultural economy</li> <li>• Protect the economic viability of Midpen working lands</li> </ul> |
| <b>Model Ecologically Sound Practices</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use rangeland management to improve grassland health, reduce wildfire fuel loads, and protect water quality</li> <li>• Promote wise water use and other ecologically sensitive farming practices</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Educate</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and foster increased awareness of public education programs about the importance of agriculture to the region's heritage and future</li> </ul>  |

Table 3.2: Vision Plan Themes and Goals (part 4)

## Overarching Principles

The Vision Plan also established a suite of overarching principles (meta-criteria) for how Midpen will work with partners and the broader community to pursue its mission and implement the Vision Plan (Box 3.2). Like the goals, these principles were used to design the priority actions. For example, Midpen carefully designed priority actions to ensure their results could be sustained given the resources available; they were also located in areas where negative impacts to natural and cultural resources were limited, to ensure they are place appropriate. The overarching principles were also used to select and prioritize the final priority actions, as described further in Chapter 4.

## Subregions

To facilitate Vision Plan development, the planning area was divided into nine subregions (Box 3.3, Figure 3.5). Developed for planning purposes only, the subregions promoted scientific assessment of the conservation values, which vary within the landscape as a result of different land use, natural and cultural resources, and recreational opportunities, among other factors. The subregions promoted the overarching principle of balance, and also facilitated community engagement by breaking up the otherwise large and diverse region into smaller, and generally more internally similar, geographic areas. For example, each of the five Vision Plan workshops held throughout the Vision Plan Area discussed the subregions located near the meeting venue; this enabled the public to focus on the geographic area of most interest to them, while allowing Midpen to obtain comprehensive information about the Vision Plan Area.



Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve

### Box 3.2: Overarching Principles

Emphasize priority actions that are:

**Networked:** Actions connect and link into a coherent system

**Balanced:** Actions are spread evenly, widely, and fairly

**Sustainable:** Actions can be done indefinitely

**Multi-benefit:** Actions promote more than one goal

**Place-appropriate:** Actions fit the place

**Leveraged:** Collaborative actions, with small investment and high return

### Box 3.3: Vision Plan Subregions

- North San Mateo County Coast
- South San Mateo County Coast
- Central Coastal Mountains
- Skyline Ridge
- Peninsula Foothills
- San Francisco Baylands
- Peninsula and South Bay Cities
- South Bay Foothills
- Sierra Azul

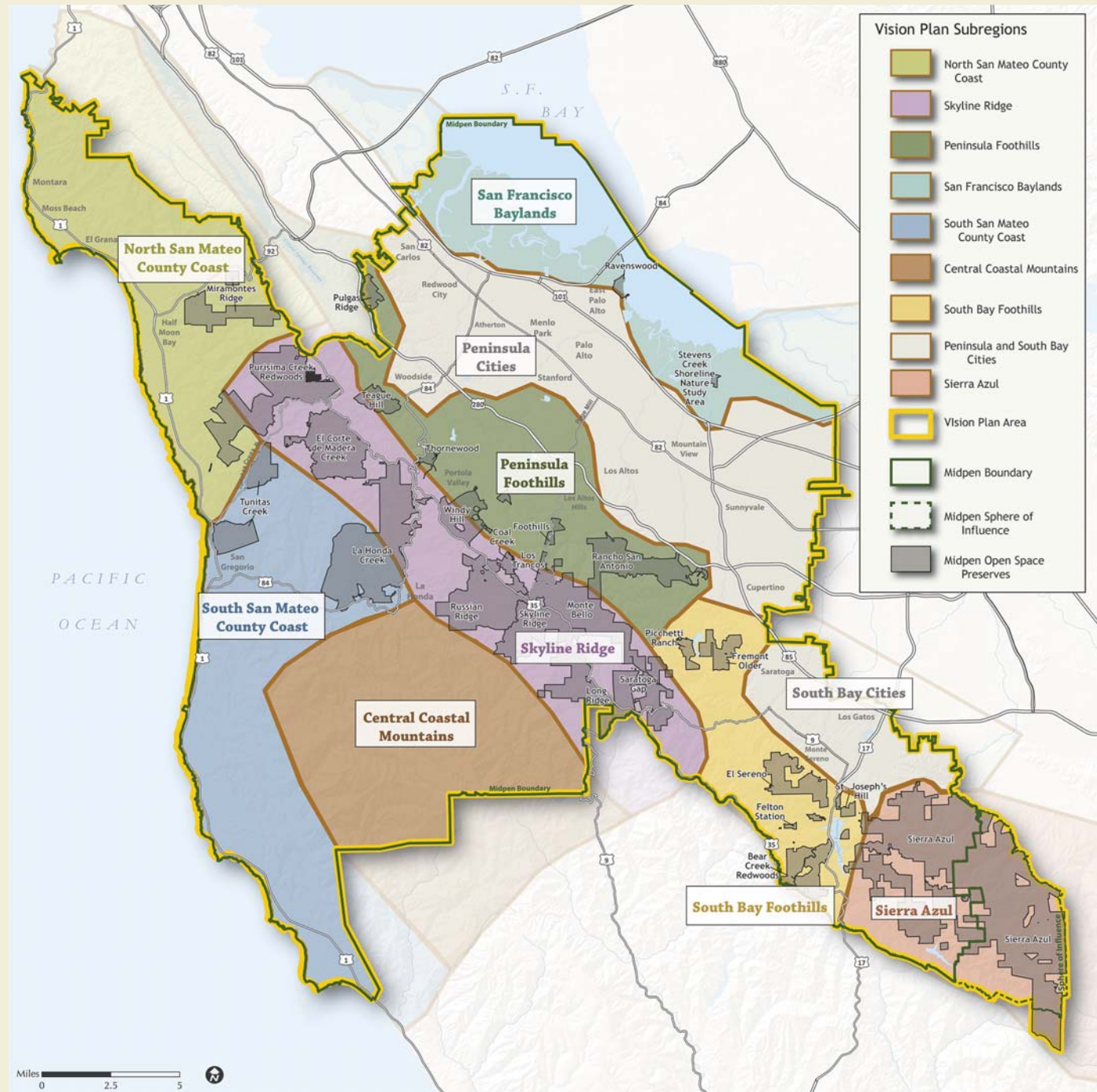


Figure 3.5: Vision Plan Subregions (used for planning purposes)

## Assessment and Analysis Findings

While Midpen was gathering input from the community, it was simultaneously completing a thorough scientific resource study to characterize the Vision Plan Area. Staff and local experts assembled and critically evaluated biological, historical, cultural, visual, agricultural, and recreational conditions within the Vision Plan Area. The following sections highlight the key findings from analyses conducted in the five thematic areas. The opportunities identified by the assessments were integrated with public input to develop the priority actions for the Vision Plan (Chapter 4). These findings also will be used to inform and guide Midpen efforts to implement the priority actions going forward.

The Conservation Atlas contains maps that illustrate many of the resources, conservation values, and opportunities identified in the planning and analysis assessments conducted for the Vision Plan. Developed using spatial data from Midpen and its conservation partners, as well as other publicly available information, each map features text explaining the information illustrated and how it was used to inform the Vision Plan. The planning and analysis reports for the themes provide additional information (Appendices C–F).

### Healthy Nature

The *Healthy Nature* component of the Vision Plan focuses on taking care of the land, air, water, and soils so that plants and animals thrive and provide natural life support services for people.

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*“It’s all about the connections. Connecting habitats and connecting trails. Enhance the wildlife corridor for species that need a certain range, like mountain lions, bobcats, deer, and coyotes. Mountain lions need to be able to cross roads.”*

— Community Member

---

It was developed by examining existing information, including prior regional plans, Midpen policies, reports, scientific studies, and spatial data on a broad array of topics (Box 3.4). Table 3.3 summarizes the key findings from these analyses, which are described in detail within the *Biodiversity Existing Conditions Report* (Appendix C).

The Vision Plan Area supports tremendous biological resources, including old-growth redwood forests, streams with ocean-going rare fish, grasslands that provide important habitat for rare birds, and diverse species endemic to serpentine soils. Midpen’s ponds and wetlands support rare plants, and provide habitat for threatened and endangered amphibians and reptiles such as the San Francisco garter snake. The region features extensive areas that can support species with large home ranges, including mountain lions; it also features critical landscape linkages that are essential to maintaining connectivity within the Peninsula, and between the Santa Cruz Mountains and adjacent mountain ranges. This connectivity, along with the varied topography and abundant cooler, moister microclimates, will help the region’s species and ecosystems be resilient to a future hotter, and a likely drier, climate.

While extensive areas important for maintaining healthy nature (also known as biodiversity) have already been protected, including Midpen’s open space preserves, a variety of factors threaten to degrade habitat even within protected lands. These include erosion, which pollutes streams, and exotic plants and animals that outcompete native species. Stewardship is needed to address these and other factors, eliminate barriers to fish migration, manage fire to promote natural ecosystems and protect public safety, and restore forest altered by prior timber harvests and the sudden oak death pathogen.

### Box 3.4: Healthy Nature Topics

#### Conservation Values

- Vegetation and Sensitive Habitats
- Old-Growth Redwood Forests
- Rare Plant and Animal Occurrences
- Streams and other Waterways
- Ponds and other Waterbodies
- Steelhead and Coho Distribution
- Watershed Integrity
- Aquatic and Terrestrial Linkages
- Intact Habitat Patches

#### Threats and Management Needs

- Landslide Potential and Soil Erosivity
- Communities at Risk of Fire and Wildland Urban Interface
- Sudden Oak Death

| Category   | Current Conditions/Finding   |
|--|--|
| <b>Highly Sensitive and Biologically Significant Communities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 89,315 acres of highly significant native plant communities within Midpen boundaries. Midpen has preserved 10.2% of these, while an additional 41% are protected by other agencies and organizations. Over 50,000 acres remain in private ownership.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Watershed and Streams</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midpen has protected 22% of the land located within the highest priority watersheds; other conservation agencies and organizations have protected an additional 27.5%. Approximately 50.5% remain unprotected.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Landscape Connectivity</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The central and western portions of the Vision Plan Area feature numerous large intact habitat patches that are still in need of further protection.</li> <li>• Highway 17 constrains east-west animal movement through the Santa Cruz Mountains. Highway 101 and Interstate 280 create barriers to connectivity between upland habitat and the bay lands. Smaller highways and major roads, including Highways 1, 35, 84, and 92 may also inhibit movement of animals and other biological processes.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Threats to Biodiversity</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erosion exacerbated by vegetation removal and other disturbances is degrading habitat in Pescadero and San Gregorio Creek watersheds. Invasive species dominate approximately 9,557 acres within the Vision Plan Area, 860 acres (9%) of which are within Midpen open space preserves.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Global Change</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities of coast redwood-Douglas fir forests may be vulnerable to decline and, ultimately, extirpation due to decrease in fog frequency.</li> <li>• Coastal scrub, maritime chaparral, and coast redwood-Douglas fir forests may decline while exotic annual grasslands expand.</li> <li>• Wet areas, such as seeps, springs, streams, ponds, marshes, lakes, and reservoirs collectively may confer resiliency to the region's species in a future hotter, drier climate.</li> <li>• The region's topographic variability creates a variety of microclimates.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Fire Management</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An estimated 21,048 acres of vegetation within the Vision Plan Area, including 8,419 acres within Midpen open space preserves, features fire-dependent communities.</li> <li>• 8,749 acres of urban lands are located at the interface of Midpen open space preserves. Community Wildfire Protection Plans have identified priority areas for fuel reduction at Pulgas Ridge, Bear Creek Redwoods, and Sierra Azul open space preserves, and along Highway 35 within seven additional open space preserves.</li> </ul>  |

Table 3.3: Healthy Nature Theme Assessment Findings (part 1)



| Category                                 | Current Conditions/Finding   |
|--|--|
| <b>Forest Management and Restoration</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midpen open space preserves contain 16.5% of all coast redwood-Douglas fir forests that exist in the Vision Plan Area.</li> <li>• Hardwood forests are facing widespread tree mortality due to sudden oak death (SOD) and Douglas fir encroachment in the absence of natural fire. The Vision Plan Area contains the highest concentration of recorded SOD detections in the Santa Cruz Mountains.</li> </ul> |

Table 3.3: Healthy Nature Theme Assessment Findings (part 2)

In order to assess the relative value of land within the Vision Plan Area for promoting conservation of biodiversity, a weighted overlay analysis was used to integrate the conservation value data (Figure 3.6). This analysis produced a single spatial data layer that was used to identify areas where land protection, restoration, and stewardship could most effectively promote biodiversity (Figure 3.7). This analysis also revealed areas of high conservation value scattered throughout the Vision Plan Area; they include privately owned land that merits conservation, as well as habitat within existing parks and open space preserves where stewardship and restoration can promote biodiversity.

The conservation value layer was used, along with other spatial data assembled for this theme, to identify land protection, stewardship, and management activities that could promote Midpen’s mission. The assessment identified the following opportunities to promote the *Healthy Nature* goals as part of the Vision Plan:

- Protect bayfront habitat and restore critical wetlands to facilitate plants and animal migration as sea level rises;
- Conserve and restore key coastal watersheds and streams, including San Gregorio and Pescadero creeks, which provide habitat for threatened steelhead and endangered coho salmon;

- Preserve sensitive habitats, including old-growth redwood forests, coastal grasslands, and serpentine communities, as well as ponds, wetlands, and riparian areas, to promote persistence of the many rare plants and animals they support, including the marbled murrelet, San Francisco garter snake, and San Mateo woolly sunflower;

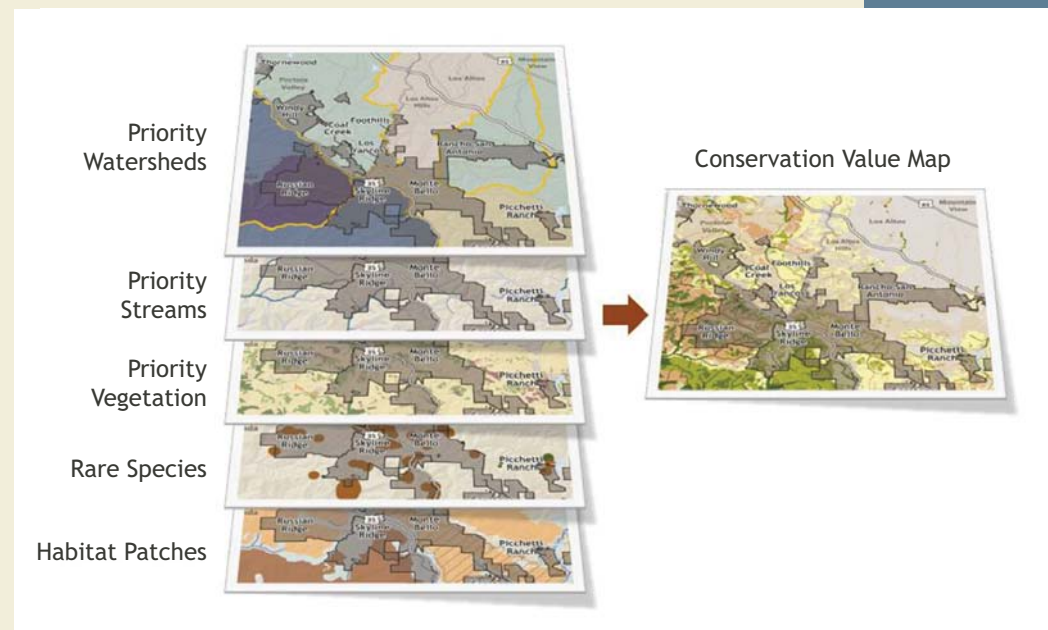


Figure 3.6: Healthy Nature Assessment Process

- Manage oak woodlands and conifer forests to restore their natural structure and species composition and enhance their resiliency to fire and diseases such as sudden oak death;
- Promote habitat connectivity to facilitate movement of wildlife through “pinch points” within the Santa Cruz Mountains, including Highway 17, to enable migration to adjacent mountain ranges to maintain regional connectivity within the Central Coast; and
- Facilitate adaptation and resiliency to global change, including a potentially hotter and drier climate, by conserving habitat and securing important landscape linkages that will enable species migration towards places that are within their climatic tolerances.

By implementing projects to protect and restore the natural ecosystems within the Vision Plan Area, Midpen can help safeguard and enhance the important services that these services provide to residents, including:

- streams and aquifers that provide clean drinking water;
- wetlands that filter runoff and buffer land from flooding;
- grasslands that support grazing animals and ranching as a way of life;
- shrublands and forests that sequester carbon, purify air, and support pollinators that fertilize agricultural crops; and
- intact ecosystems that provide important cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities.



Deanne Little

Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

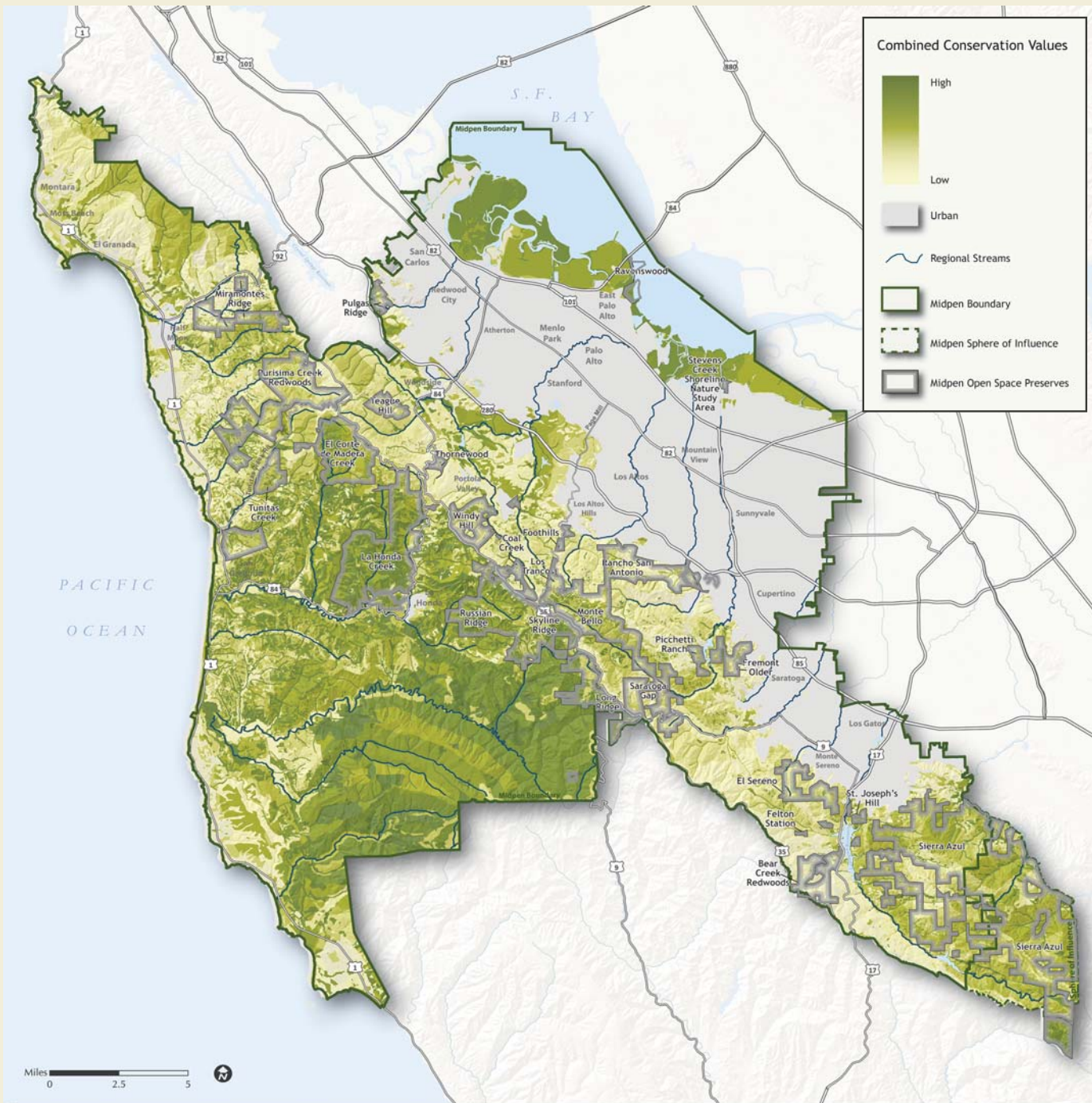


Figure 3.7: Combined Conservation Values for the Healthy Nature Theme

## Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living

*“I enjoy the outdoors, and that’s why I do a lot of hiking. I like to take my dogs with me since it’s great exercise for them too. Plus it’s my main way of getting outside since I work a lot during the week.”*

— Community Member

The Outdoor Recreation and Healthy Living component of the Vision Plan focused on identifying ways to provide accessible open space for recreation and outdoor exercise in a natural setting. To inform Vision Plan development, available data about existing and planned recreation opportunities within the Vision Plan Area were synthesized and used to identify gaps and opportunities for additional access. The assessment evaluated facilities for camping, nature exploration (e.g. nature centers), and picnicking, as well as trails available for mountain biking, horseback riding, and dog walking; the availability of trails accessible by wheelchair, stroller,

and walker was also examined. The assessment also considered ways to connect existing open space and recreational lands, as well as extend regional trails such as the San Francisco Bay Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, Stevens Creek Trail, and California Coastal Trail. These analyses were conducted by subregion because of varying levels and types of visitor access. The detailed findings are outlined in the *Existing Conditions for Access, Recreation and Education Report* (Appendix D). Table 3.4 and Figure 3.8 summarize the main findings.

Overall, the Vision Plan Area provides opportunities for enhanced outdoor recreation. Highlights include:

- Increasing access to existing public open space within La Honda, Bear Creek Redwoods, and Sierra Azul open space preserves;
- Enhancing capacity of high use areas, such as Fremont Older and Rancho San Antonio open space preserves; and
- Promoting regional trail connections, including a Purisima-to-the-Sea trail; a trail connecting Big Basin, Butano, and Portola Redwoods state parks to Pescadero Creek County Park and Midpen’s Skyline region open space preserves; and promoting completion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, Bay Trail, Stevens Creek Trail, and California Coastal Trail.



Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

| Subregion                           | Access Limitations   | Opportunities  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>North San Mateo County Coast</b> | Traffic capacity on Highways 1 and 92 limits visitation on peak weekends; minimal mountain bike opportunities, and limited foothill access.  | Although foothill access is relatively limited, further development of Rancho Corral de Tierra (part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area) and the lower portion of Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (OSP) provide opportunities to alleviate these limitations.                   |
| <b>South San Mateo County Coast</b> | Very limited access and developed facilities.  | Most of the protected lands in the South Coast have very limited access and facilities. There is significant demand for more substantial picnic, camping, and lodging facilities.  |
| <b>Central Coastal Mountains</b>    | Dog access is quite limited (prohibited in both state and county parks); mountain biking is limited to road-width trails rather than more technical single-track trails.   | Sempervirens Fund, Save-the-Redwoods League, and other private conservation organizations are actively protecting the redwood forests in this region. These lands could be transferred to public ownership and opened to public access if appropriate.   |
| <b>Skyline Ridge</b>                | Few opportunities for dog access.  | There is the opportunity to complete gaps in the Bay Area Ridge Trail and local connecting routes and trails.  |
| <b>Peninsula Foothills</b>          | Although outdoor experiences are in close proximity to suburban areas, visitation is limited to visitors with cars. Visitation is concentrated at Rancho San Antonio County Park and OSP, and parking lot is at full capacity. Relatively limited extent of dog access. No nature centers. | Due to its proximity to suburban areas, this subregion provides opportunities to reach a broad range of users and to increase public transportation access. Because of the multitude of parks there is an opportunity to lessen the concentration of visitors and disperse users to other parks. |
| <b>South Bay Foothills</b>          | Limited environmental education facilities.  | Bear Creek Redwoods OSP offers unique access and interpretative potential, with the redwood forest environment and former college facilities.  |

Table 3.4: Outdoor Recreation Assessment Findings (part 1)

| Subregion                             | Access Limitations  | Opportunities  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>San Francisco Baylands</b>         | Gaps in the San Francisco Bay Trail decrease the trail network's interconnectivity.   | Need to complete gaps in the San Francisco Bay Trail and Stevens Creek Trail. Environmental educational facilities in this area could reach and serve a broad range of visitors.   |
| <b>Peninsula and South Bay Cities</b> | Limited opportunity for natural recreational experiences within the city setting.   | Potential for local connecting trails along creeks and between schools, leveraging planned creek restoration work and safe-route-to-school efforts.  |
| <b>Sierra Azul</b>                    | The southern two-thirds offers very limited access due to steep topography and challenging road access. Most is currently closed to the public. | Long-term opportunity to be a major outdoor recreation resource for the South Bay. Opportunities to open currently closed areas to the public through development of access and facilities at Rancho de Guadalupe and Mount Umunhum areas. |

Table 3.4: Outdoor Recreation Assessment Findings (part 2)



Jack Geschick

Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve

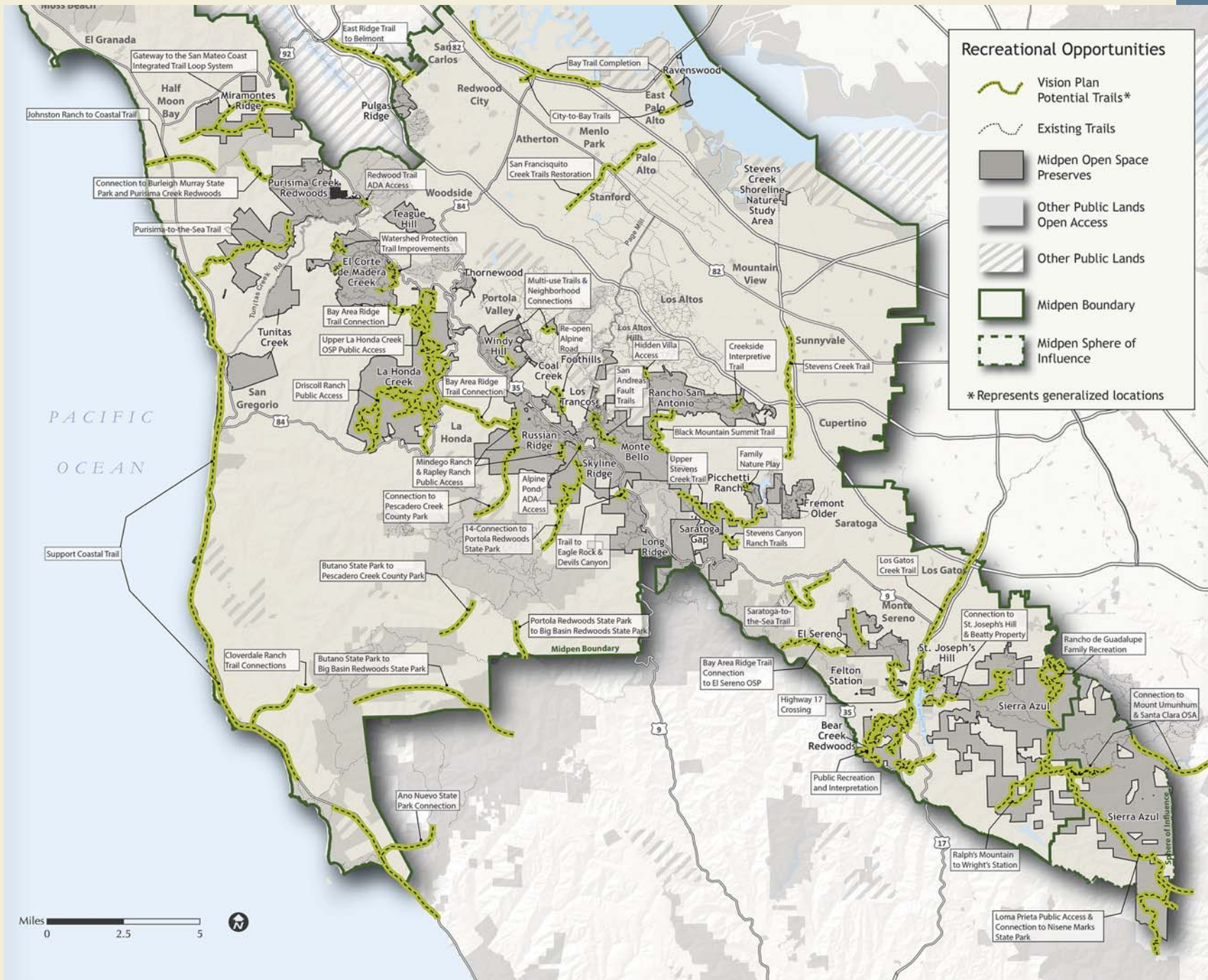


Figure 3.8: Regional Trails and Midpen Open Space Preserves

## Enriched Experiences

*“I think people need to know how important those spaces are, and actually know the effects and what happens to the environment when more people live there. There should be training so people can volunteer and help do their part.”*

— Community Member

The *Enriched Experiences* theme of the Vision Plan addresses opportunities to learn about and appreciate the local environment, as well as connecting people with nature and with each other. Such opportunities were evaluated through an assessment of existing nature centers and programs offered within the region. The cultural resources assessments prepared as part of the *Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes* theme were used to develop priority actions that promote valuing local history, as well as projects to interpret the agricultural history indicated in the *Viable Working Lands* theme. Midpen partners were interviewed to ascertain

what types of activities, projects, and programs would be most important for providing additional opportunities for ecologically sensitive education and interpretation.

Overall, the Vision Plan Area provides opportunities for enhanced enriched experiences. Highlights include:

- Learning about and valuing the local environment;
- Connecting people with nature and with each other;
- Reaching underserved communities;
- Getting youth out in nature;
- Embracing technology;
- Involving community members in hands-on stewardship;
- Retaining, valuing, and sharing local history; and
- Providing service opportunities to the community.

Table 3.5 summarizes the key findings from these analyses, which are described in detail within Appendices D–F.



Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve

Jack Gschelid



| Category                         | Current Conditions/Finding   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <p><b>Baseline Inventory</b></p> | <p>Within the Vision Plan Area, a broad spectrum of interpretive, educational, and volunteer stewardship programs currently provide diverse opportunities for enriched experiences within open space. Facilities and programs are operated by Midpen, as well as by national parks, state parks, county parks, private conservation organizations, cities, and local schools. Existing opportunities for enriched experiences are currently concentrated in the Central Coast Mountains subregion; many are focused on the natural and cultural history of the coast redwood forest. Examples of existing opportunities include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>On-site interpretation and education centers</b>, which interpret natural and cultural history using interpretive displays, natural trails, and guided programs within existing parks and open space. Currently found at 10 locations, they include Midpen’s Daniels Nature Center in Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Portola Redwoods State Park, Deer Hollow Farm within the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, and the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Center.</li> <li>• <b>Interpretive programs</b>, including docent-led programs, are offered at numerous parks and open space areas, including national recreation areas, state parks, county parks, and Midpen open space preserves;</li> <li>• <b>Volunteer stewardship programs</b>, in which visitors help preserve and protect open space lands by maintaining trails and controlling non-native plants. Many such programs incorporate citizen science activities, in which visitors help conduct surveys and monitor natural resources, including plants, animals, and water quality, to help inform their conservation and management.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Opportunities</b></p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are fewer on-site interpretive facilities in parks and open space areas within the Peninsula Foothills, Baylands, and Peninsula Cities subregions. Education centers and interpretive programs could potentially receive high visitation due to their proximity to population centers and ease of access. Midpen preserves in these subregions could expand programs and facilities for enriched experiences, including family-based programs, such as nature-play activities.</li> <li>• Midpen could offer expanded enriched experiences in conjunction with partners such as local nonprofits, schools, and other public agencies.</li> <li>• The cultural resources assessment also identified opportunities to enhance experiences by interpreting historic and prehistoric sites within the Midpen open space preserves (Table 3.7). These resources illustrate various themes from the cultural history of the region, and are concentrated in the Peninsula Foothills and Skyline subregions.</li> </ul>  |

Table 3.5: Enriched Experiences Assessment Findings

## Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes

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*“Walking the trails and taking in the beautiful scenery is what it’s all about, and we can’t do that if we don’t maintain what we have.”*

— Community Member

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The *Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes* theme focused on conserving the area’s scenery and rich history, and providing places for escape and quiet enjoyment. Analyses for this theme included work to identify scenic resources and better understand the cultural landscape and resources within the Vision Plan Area. To identify important scenic landscapes, Midpen inventoried county- and state-designated scenic areas, surveyed knowledgeable staff on areas of high scenic significance, interviewed partners concerned with cultural and scenic issues, and created a spatial database and map of these scenic resources. The cultural resource assessment included work to compile the prehistoric and historic background for the region, based on existing literature and expert knowledge; consultation with the Native American community to understand their perspectives; and assembling a baseline inventory of cultural resource records.

The *Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes* assessment identified key iconic places and views by subregion that make the Vision Plan Area unique (Table 3.6 and Figure 3.9). Many of these landscape features have already been preserved within Midpen’s open space preserves, but others are threatened and their loss could alter the scenic natural character of the landscape. The assessment also identifies opportunities for action (Table 3.7).

The cultural resource assessment revealed that the Vision Plan Area has been the site of long-term human occupation involving a wide array of prehistoric and historic period land uses, many of which manifest themselves as cultural resources that survive to the present. Due to their limited development, Midpen preserves and other open space in the region likely feature abundant and diverse cultural resources. Although relatively few new resources were identified during the cultural resource data collection, numerous unidentified cultural resources are likely to be present on Midpen lands. Future site-specific investigations of Midpen lands may reveal additional cultural resources and ways of connecting the public to the cultural heritage of the area. Detailed results of these assessments are described in Appendix E.



Windy Hill Open Space Preserve

Deanne Little

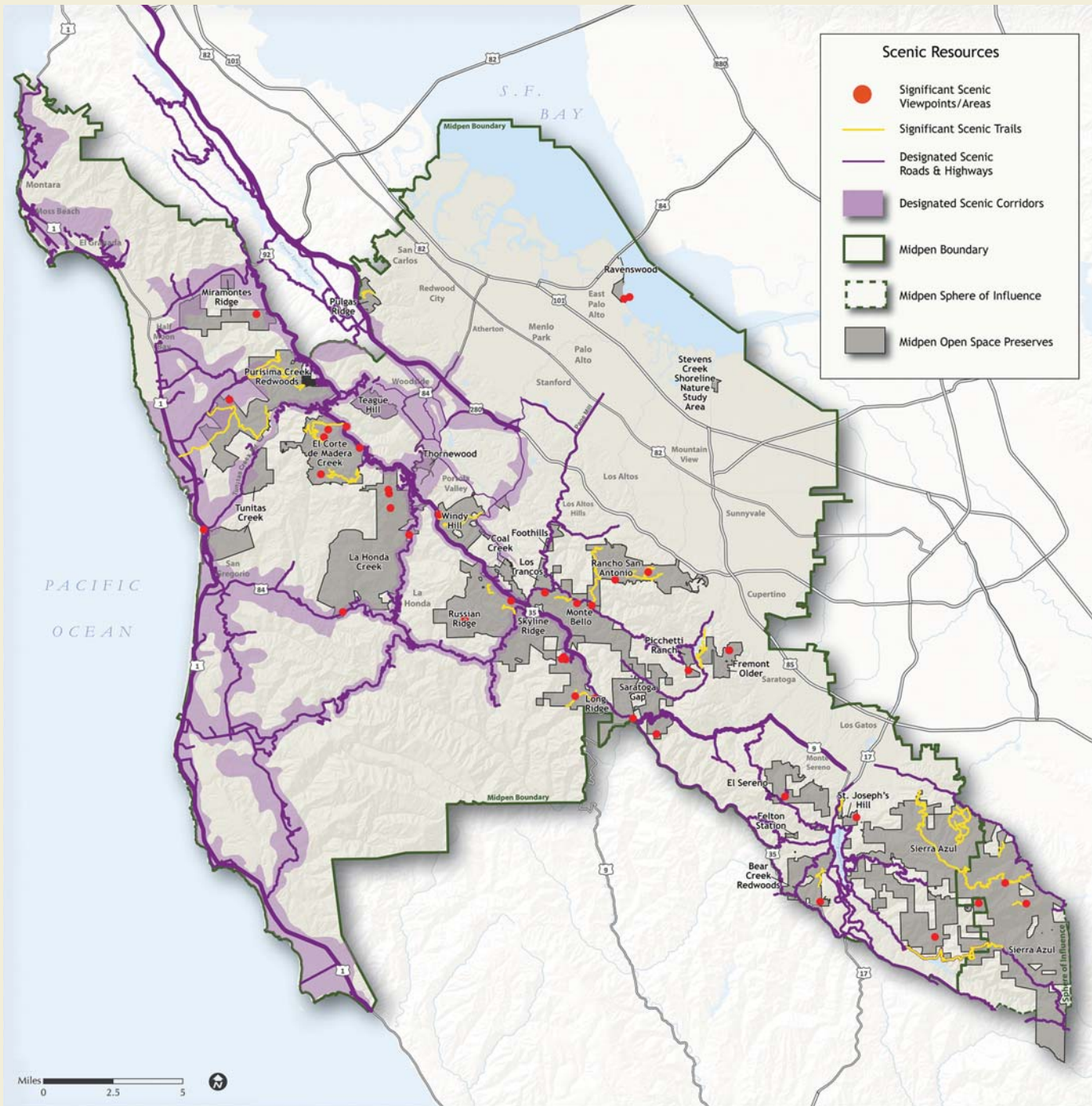


Figure 3.9: Scenic Resources

| Subregions                          | Iconic Places and Views   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>North San Mateo County Coast</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View of curve of Half Moon Bay</li> <li>• Bluff/lighthouse at Pillar Point</li> <li>• Montara Mountain</li> <li>• Ocean, rugged coastline, views of waves</li> <li>• Tidepools/beaches</li> <li>• Agricultural fields/greenhouses</li> <li>• Coastal landscape character</li> </ul>  |
| <b>South San Mateo County Coast</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redwood forests scenic backdrop</li> <li>• Character of coastal landscape</li> <li>• Agricultural way of life, farms, cattle grazing</li> <li>• Ocean, rugged coastline, views of waves</li> <li>• Tidepools/beaches</li> <li>• Narrow rural roads</li> <li>• Pigeon Point Lighthouse</li> <li>• Año Nuevo Native American village</li> <li>• Coastal streams (San Gregorio, Pescadero)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Central Coastal Mountains</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redwood forests</li> <li>• Rugged stream canyons</li> <li>• Narrow rural roads</li> <li>• Logging history</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Skyline Ridge</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindego Hill</li> <li>• Cattle grazing history</li> <li>• Redwood forests</li> <li>• Skyline Boulevard scenic corridor (Highway 35)</li> <li>• Bay vistas</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.6: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes Assessment Findings (part 1)

| Subregions                            | Iconic Places and Views   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Peninsula Foothills</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic country estates</li> <li>• Windy Hill</li> <li>• Bay vistas</li> <li>• Farming and grazing history</li> <li>• Views of Santa Clara Valley floor and rolling foothills</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>South Bay Foothills</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remains of the Alma historic town site and valley</li> <li>• Alma College site</li> <li>• Views of Santa Clara Valley floor and rolling foothills</li> <li>• Picchetti Ranch</li> <li>• Fremont Older House</li> </ul> |
| <b>San Francisco Baylands</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrating wildlife</li> <li>• History of human use of the Bay's edge (oysters, salt)</li> <li>• Marshlands</li> <li>• San Francisco Bay Trail</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Peninsula and South Bay Cities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stream corridors</li> <li>• Remnant natural landscapes</li> <li>• Distant ridgeline views</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Sierra Azul</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Umunhum</li> <li>• Bald Mountain, Loma Prieta, El Sombroso, Ridgeline</li> <li>• Remains of New Almaden mining district</li> <li>• Views of Guadalupe Creek from Hicks Road</li> </ul>                           |

Table 3.6: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes Assessment Findings (part 2)

| Category                   | Potential Opportunities   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Overall</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access or protection of iconic locations and natural features relevant to the Bay Area and beyond.</li> <li>• Increase sense of place by protecting locally significant natural and cultural features.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Cultural Landscapes</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), descendants of Native Americans who lived in the region, and local historical societies provided valuable feedback. Feedback included recommendations to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make restoring natural landscape a high priority;</li> <li>• Integrate traditional Native American land stewardship practices;</li> <li>• Work with appropriate local tribe for each of the preserves regarding identification and protection of culturally sensitive sites;</li> <li>• Work proactively with the appropriate local tribe during project planning stage;</li> <li>• Work with tribes to develop a model of areas with high probability of Native American sites;</li> <li>• Consult with Native Americans on the stewardship plan; and</li> <li>• Provide all crews working in culturally sensitive areas with cultural sensitivity and artifact identification training so they can identify artifacts or burials.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cultural resources in Midpen preserves provide an opportunity for public education and interpretation, though importantly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is essential to protect and preserve cultural sites that could be impacted by opening them to the public.</li> <li>• Prior to implementing interpretive programs, Midpen should consult with cultural resources specialists and descendants of local communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The following are general locations and site types within Midpen open space preserves that provide good interpretive opportunities with minimal exposure to damage or destruction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sierra Azul’s Mount Umunhum: Part of the Ohlone creation story; aids in interpreting Native American cosmology; former Almaden Air Force Station.</li> <li>• Baylands Park: Opportunity to interpret monumental mounds.</li> <li>• Russian Ridge: Opportunity to interpret Native American travel routes and gardens.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

Table 3.7: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Opportunities (part 1)

| Category                               | Potential Opportunities  |
|--|--|
| <b>Cultural Landscapes (continued)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedrock mortar sites at La Honda and Monte Bello: These sites do not have associated deposits, and tend to be less destructible than other Native American sites.</li> <li>• Rancho San Antonio: Good for interpreting foothill resource extraction and acorn harvest.</li> <li>• Bear Creek Redwoods: Opportunity to interpret historic uses of the preserve, including logging, remnant structures, and landscape features (e.g. truss bridge); former landowners; and historic educational campus. Seek partnerships for reuse and shared rehabilitation and maintenance of the Alma College structures.</li> <li>• Guadalupe mercury mining: Opportunity to interpret the significance of remnant mercury mining sites in conjunction with environmental education programs at Santa Clara County’s Almaden Quicksilver County Park.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Natural Landscapes</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional access to narrow trails with limited human-made features.</li> <li>• Emphasize areas designed for quiet experiences, shielded by earth, vegetation, or other means to provide a restful experience free of traffic and other sounds of daily life.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Scenic Landscapes</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve the scenic backdrop visible from urban areas.</li> <li>• Protect lands within designated scenic corridors or that can be seen from protected land.</li> <li>• Preserve the scenic qualities of the coast and rural areas within the Vision Plan Area, including vegetation and vistas.</li> <li>• Provide access to quiet places to enjoy vistas and take refuge from urban life.</li> <li>• Closely monitor outside projects and potential threats to scenic views. Monitor and attempt to stop the destruction of historic landscapes and traditions.</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.7: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Opportunities (part 2)

## Viable Working Lands

*“Agriculture is healthy for the community and healthy for the land.”*

— Community Member

The *Viable Working Lands* theme centers on protecting agricultural lands that reflect our heritage and provide food and jobs. Assessments of working lands in the Vision Plan Area focused on documenting the distribution and areal extent of farmland and grazing land, and identifying the trends, constraints, and opportunities for agriculture in the region. The working lands analysis was developed based upon plans and studies about agriculture in the Bay Area, data about Vision Plan Area agricultural land uses and products, and interviews with various agricultural experts. The analyses and results are shown in Figure 3.10, summarized in Table 3.8, and can be found in full within Appendix F.

The Vision Plan Area has produced agricultural products for the greater Bay Area and beyond for several centuries. Valleys on the bayside produced orchard crops, wine grapes, and nursery crops; the coastal bluffs have produced nursery crops and vegetables; and the grasslands and oak savannas have long been used to graze livestock. Presently, nursery crops account for more than 75% of the market value of crops in San Mateo County, which contains much of the agricultural land within the Vision Plan Area.

Though San Mateo and Santa Clara counties both feature land use policies that are protective of farmland, more than 5,000 acres of farmland, including approximately 2,200 acres of prime farmland, have been taken out of production within the Vision Plan Area since 1990. During the past decade, the market value of crops has declined 63%.

Growers indicate that water, including access to water and water supply reliability, is a big challenge to viability, as is availability of farm labor.

According to livestock producers, limited availability of grazing lands, degraded ranch-based infrastructure, and lack of animal processing facilities constrain livestock production within the Vision Plan Area. Growing recognition on the part of landowners that grazing animals provide important ecosystem services may offer an opportunity to make more land available for grazing. Of the 48,765 acres of land suitable for grazing within the Vision Plan Area, Midpen owns approximately 8,227 acres (17%). Midpen recently reintroduced cattle to approximately 2,000 acres of grazing land within the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve.

These findings were used to develop priority actions that promote viability of working lands as part of this theme, as well as projects to interpret the agricultural history as part of the *Enriched Experiences* theme.



Lobitos Ridge Farms, Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve



| Category           | Current Conditions/Finding  |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Status</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of 2010, the Vision Plan Area featured 6,083 acres of cultivated farmland, which included 2,199 acres of prime farmland; it also featured 48,765 acres of land suitable for grazing.</li> <li>• Midpen owns 8,227 acres of lands suitable for grazing (17% of all grazing land within the Vision Plan Area), has full or partial easements over another 317 acres of grazing lands, and owns 113 acres of farmland, including 32 acres of prime farmland (2% of all farmland within the Vision Plan Area).</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Trends</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmland has decreased by more than 5,000 acres in the past 20 years within the Vision Plan Area.</li> <li>• Over the past decade, the value of crop production has experienced a steep decline (63%), with acreage also declining (22%). Brussels sprouts make up about half of crop values. Diversification of crops will be critical to future viability of the agricultural industry.</li> <li>• Fruit production (mainly berries and wine grapes) represents only around 10% of overall crop production value. However, over the past decade, fruit production market value has increased by 73% and fruit acreage by 131%.</li> <li>• While there appears to be some influx of new farmers, they are undertaking small, diversified operations rather than taking over the larger, conventional operations.</li> <li>• There is an increased demand for meat and animal products that are raised in a manner that cares for the environment, utilizes humane practices, and is locally produced.</li> <li>• The growing recognition on the part of landowners that grazing animals provide important ecosystem services may provide an opportunity to make more land available for grazing. Some ranchers also hope that at some point there might be payment for the provision of such ecosystem services.</li> <li>• Brussels sprout production is up by 78%, even though acreage is down 9%, which indicates impressive gains in yields.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Constraints</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water, including access to water and supply reliability, is a big challenge especially given increasing demand.</li> <li>• There is virtually no farm labor pool on the coast primarily due to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing for farm employees.</li> <li>• Peak-season labor needs exceed local capacity.</li> <li>• Some ranchers express concern that their viability is in the hands of Midpen and other public landowners for whom maintaining and enhancing agricultural economic viability is not a top priority.</li> <li>• There is more demand than supply for grazing lands.</li> <li>• Ranch-based infrastructure, regardless of ownership, is largely degraded.</li> <li>• Fragmentation of grazing lands requires moving animals around.</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.8: Working Lands Theme Assessment Findings

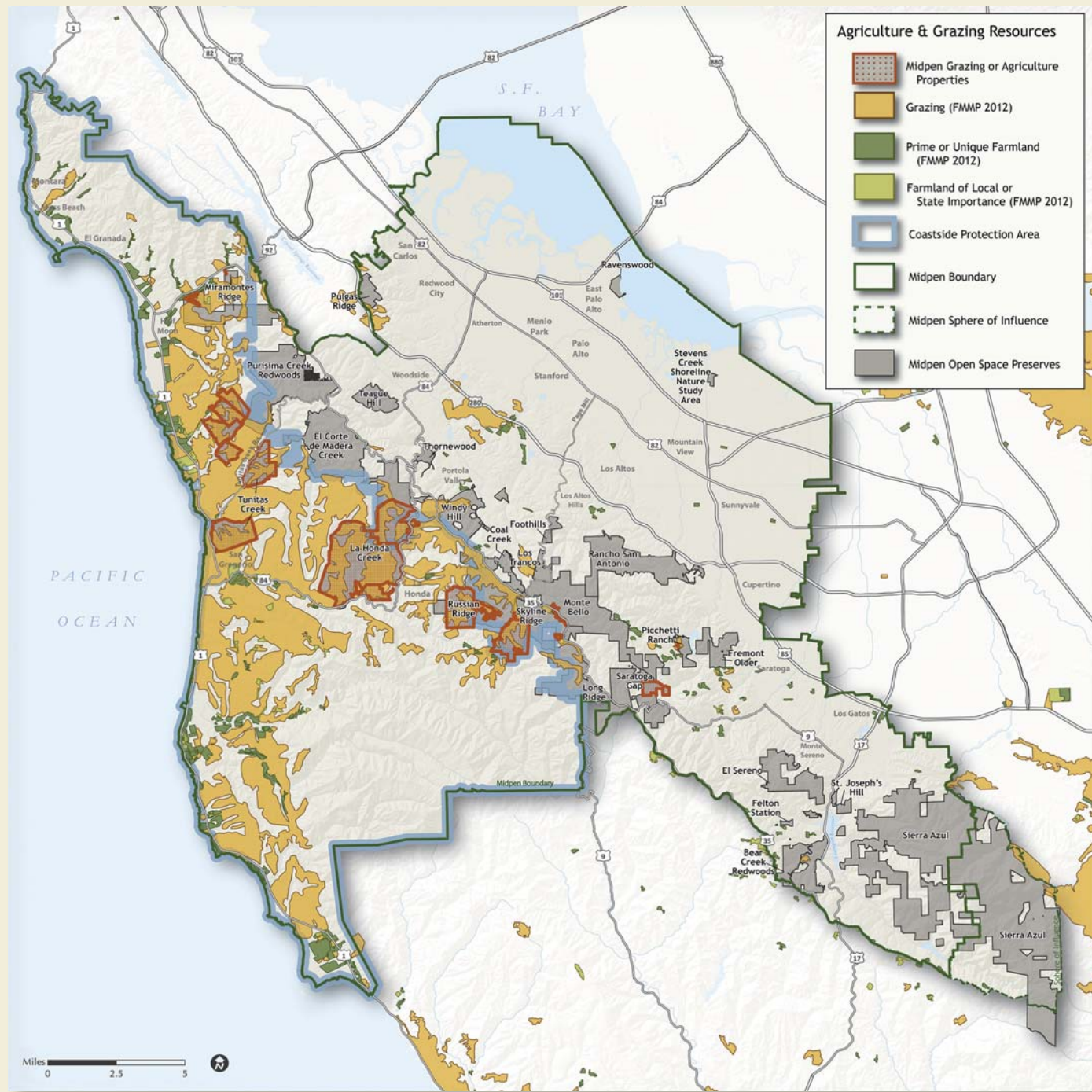


Figure 3.10: Agricultural Resources

# Chapter 4: Choosing Vision Plan Priority Actions

Priority actions are the land protection, resource management, public access, and interpretation/outdoor education projects that Midpen will implement during the coming decades in collaboration with partners and the community, in order to achieve the Vision Plan goals. The priority actions were developed based on scientific analysis as well as community input, in careful consideration of the goals and overarching principles. They were refined through an iterative public planning process to maximize their effectiveness at achieving the goals, and they reflect the community's priorities. The extensive process used for priority action development is summarized below and further discussed in Appendix G.

Each priority action is comprised of groups of projects ("priority action portfolios"), which will be carried out in stages over time. Some priority actions are regional strategies to be implemented across a range of locations, such as protecting redwood forests and salmon fisheries. Others are site-specific actions designed to achieve multiple goals in a particular area, such as improving public access, interpretation, and rare species habitat within La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve. Table 4.1 lists all the priority actions, the locations of which are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

## Box 4.1: Priority Action Types

- **Land Protection:** Acquiring fee title or conservation easements to safeguard natural, cultural, and scenic resources, enhance public recreation and education opportunities, or protect working lands.
- **Resource Management:** Conducting stewardship projects on Midpen lands, to maintain or restore natural, cultural, and scenic resources, or enhance viability of working lands.
- **Public Access:** Developing new facilities to promote low-intensity recreation within Midpen preserves, including trails and staging areas.
- **Interpretation and Education:** Developing new facilities (e.g., interpretive centers) and programs to enrich visitors' experiences within Midpen preserves.

## Public Deliberation Workshops and Online Public Participation

Recognizing that not all actions can be implemented in the near term, Midpen used two parallel strategies to engage the public in choosing which actions are highest priority: face-to-face public workshops and online interaction. Midpen held seven public workshops designed to prioritize the actions with community members, the Community Advisory Committee, and the Midpen Board of Directors. Five of these public workshops were held in locations across the Vision Plan Area (Half Moon Bay, Saratoga, La Honda, Mountain View, and Redwood City), each with a

focus on the overall Vision Plan goals and sets of priority actions associated with at least two planning subregions. The workshops included presentations, small group discussions, and the use of keypad technology to rate the goals and priority actions. This approach enabled participants to express individual opinions and preferences, and to have immediate access to the aggregated responses of the group. A total of 234 participants attended these in-person workshops.



The online community engagement website ran concurrently with the public workshops. Like those involved in public workshops, online participants rated both goals and priority actions; however, online participants could also rate actions across all regions. In the end, 600 participants rated goals and/or actions within the online platform during the deliberation phase.

Altogether Midpen's community engagement website pages were viewed 38,000 times. The site and its hundreds of discussion topics helped define Midpen's priorities during Vision Plan development.

## Near-Term and Long-Term Priorities

The public input gathered across all three sources of deliberative input (public workshops, online input, and the CAC meetings) was combined and evaluated to assign the priority actions into two tiers that reflect their levels of preference and priority. The tiers were determined by evaluating all 54 priority actions across the following four metrics:

- Level of public support given through the public deliberation meetings;
- Level of public support given through the online website;
- Level of support given by the Community Advisory Committee; and
- Level of success and beneficial impact in implementing the goals for the Vision Plan (as evaluated by staff based upon the assessment findings).

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*These priority actions will inform  
Midpen's annual work plan, budget,  
and capital improvement plan in the future.*

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A priority action was identified as Tier 1 if it was rated highly across at least three of these four measures. Also, in order to ensure wide distribution of Tier 1 projects across the Vision Plan Area, priority actions that were rated the highest in each subregion were also included in Tier 1; other actions were rated as Tier 2.

As shown in Table 4.1, the first tier includes 25 near-term priority actions, and the second tier includes longer-term priorities. Tier 1 are those priority actions that received the greatest level of public support and meet the largest number of Vision Plan goals, based upon the planning and scientific analysis assessments. Tier 1 actions are receiving a greater emphasis and nearer-term focus.

Detailed profiles of the priority actions are presented in Chapter 5.

**Box 4.2:**  
**The Top 25 priority actions will:**

- Protect redwood forests
- Ensure clean water and salmon habitat
- Add over 200 miles of new trails
- Open 20,000 acres of land
- Provide 13 new staging and parking areas
- Provide outdoor education opportunities at 13 locations
- Preserve over 50,000 acres of open space
- Enhance wetlands and ponds for rare wildlife at 10 open space preserves
- Improve ranches and rangelands at 4 open space preserves
- Protect wildlife corridors



Workshop participants discussing priority actions

Midpen Staff

| Number        | Action Location and Name   |
|---------------|--|
| <b>Tier 1</b> |  |
| 1             | Miramontes Ridge: Gateway to the San Mateo Coast Public Access, Stream Restoration, and Agriculture Enhancement Projects |
| 2             | Regional: Bayfront Habitat Protection and Public Access Partnerships   |
| 3             | Purisima Creek Redwoods: Purisima-to-Sea Trail Completion, Watershed Protection, and Conservation Grazing Projects       |
| 4             | El Corte de Madera Creek: Bike Trail and Water Quality Projects  |
| 5             | La Honda Creek: Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration, and Conservation Grazing Projects                            |
| 6             | Windy Hill: Trail Improvements, Preservation, and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership                                    |
| 7             | La Honda Creek: Driscoll Ranch Area Public Access, Endangered Wildlife Protection, and Conservation Grazing Projects     |
| 8             | La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge: Preservation of Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion                    |
| 9             | Russian Ridge: Public Recreation, Grazing, and Wildlife Protection Projects  |
| 10            | Coal Creek: Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use   |
| 11            | Rancho San Antonio: Interpretive Improvements, Refurbishing, and Transit Solutions                                       |
| 12            | Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail   |
| 13            | Cloverdale Ranch: Wildlife Protection, Grazing, and Trail Connections  |
| 14            | Regional: Trail Connections and Campgrounds  |
| 15            | Regional: Redwood Protection and Salmon Fishery Conservation   |
| 16            | Long Ridge: Trail, Conservation, and Habitat Restoration Projects  |
| 17            | Regional: Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail   |
| 18            | South Bay Foothills: Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Wildlife Corridor   |
| 19            | El Sereno: Dog Trails and Connections  |

Table 4.1: Vision Plan Priority Actions (part 1)

| Number                    | Action Location and Name   |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Tier 1 (continued)</b> |  |
| 20                        | South Bay Foothills: Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements   |
| 21                        | Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects   |
| 22                        | Sierra Azul: Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects  |
| 23                        | Sierra Azul: Mount Umunhum Public Access and Interpretation Projects   |
| 24                        | Sierra Azul: Rancho de Guadalupe Family Recreation and Interpretive Projects   |
| 25                        | Sierra Azul: Loma Prieta Area Public Access, Regional Trails, and Habitat Projects   |
| <b>Tier 2</b>             |  |
| 26                        | Pulgas Ridge: Regional and Neighborhood Trail Extensions   |
| 27                        | Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Coastside Environmental Education Partnerships   |
| 28                        | Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Mills Creek/Arroyo Leon Watershed Protection, Stream Restoration, and Regional Trail Connections |
| 29                        | Regional: Advocate to Protect Coastal Vistas of North San Mateo County Coast   |
| 30                        | Regional: Support California Coastal Trail   |
| 31                        | Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Fire Management and Risk Reduction   |
| 32                        | Tunitas Creek: Additional Watershed Preservation and Conservation Grazing  |
| 33                        | Purisima Creek Redwoods: Parking and Repair Projects   |
| 34                        | Teague Hill: West Union Creek Watershed Restoration Partnership  |
| 35                        | Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Major Roadway Signage  |
| 36                        | Regional: Collaborate to Restore San Francisquito Creek Fish Habitat   |

Table 4.1: Vision Plan Priority Actions (part 2)

| Number                    | Action Location and Name  |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Tier 2 (continued)</b> |   |
| 37                        | Peninsula and South Bay Cities: San Francisquito Creek Restoration Partnership                        |
| 38                        | Ravenswood: Cooley Landing Nature Center Partnership  |
| 39                        | La Honda Creek/El Corte de Madera Creek: San Gregorio Watershed and Agriculture Preservation Projects |
| 40                        | Regional: San Andreas Fault Interpretive Trail Program  |
| 41                        | Rancho San Antonio: Hidden Villa Access and Preservation Projects                                     |
| 42                        | Regional: Advocate to Protect Coastal Vistas of South San Mateo County Coast                          |
| 43                        | Lower Pomponio Creek: Watershed Preservation and Conservation Grazing                                 |
| 44                        | Lower Pescadero Creek: Watershed Preservation and Conservation Grazing                                |
| 45                        | Skyline Subregion: Fire Management and Forest Restoration Projects                                    |
| 46                        | Skyline Ridge: Education Facilities, Trails, and Wildlife Conservation Projects                       |
| 47                        | Monte Bello: Campfire Talks and Habitat Projects  |
| 48                        | Gazos Creek Watershed: Redwood Preservation, Long-distance Trails, Fish Habitat Improvements          |
| 49                        | Saratoga Gap: Stevens Canyon Ranch Family Food Education Projects                                     |
| 50                        | Picchetti Ranch: Family Nature Play Program   |
| 51                        | Fremont Older: Historic Woodhills Restoration and Overall Parking Improvements                        |
| 52                        | Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Los Gatos Creek Trail Connections                                     |
| 53                        | Sierra Azul: Expand Access in the Kennedy-Limekiln Area   |
| 54                        | Sierra Azul: Fire Management  |

Table 4.1: Vision Plan Priority Actions (part 3)





Figure 4.1: Vision Plan Priority Actions Map

# Chapter 5: Priority Action Profiles

The priority actions provide Midpen and its partners with an important high-level guide — not a specific prescription — for the next 40 years. Since each priority is made up of multiple actions, they can also be characterized as “priority action portfolios,” with several discrete projects identified under each portfolio.

By directing resources to the priority actions, Midpen and others have the best opportunity to meet the goals of the Vision Plan. This integrated approach to conservation focuses on areas where

open space protection can accomplish multiple objectives, including protection of forests and streams, provision of outdoor recreation, and availability of panoramic views and rural scenery.

The following pages provide a profile of each priority action portfolio, including a description, a map, information about the goals accomplished, and icons depicting the action’s main components. Figure 5.1 explains the components of each priority action profile.

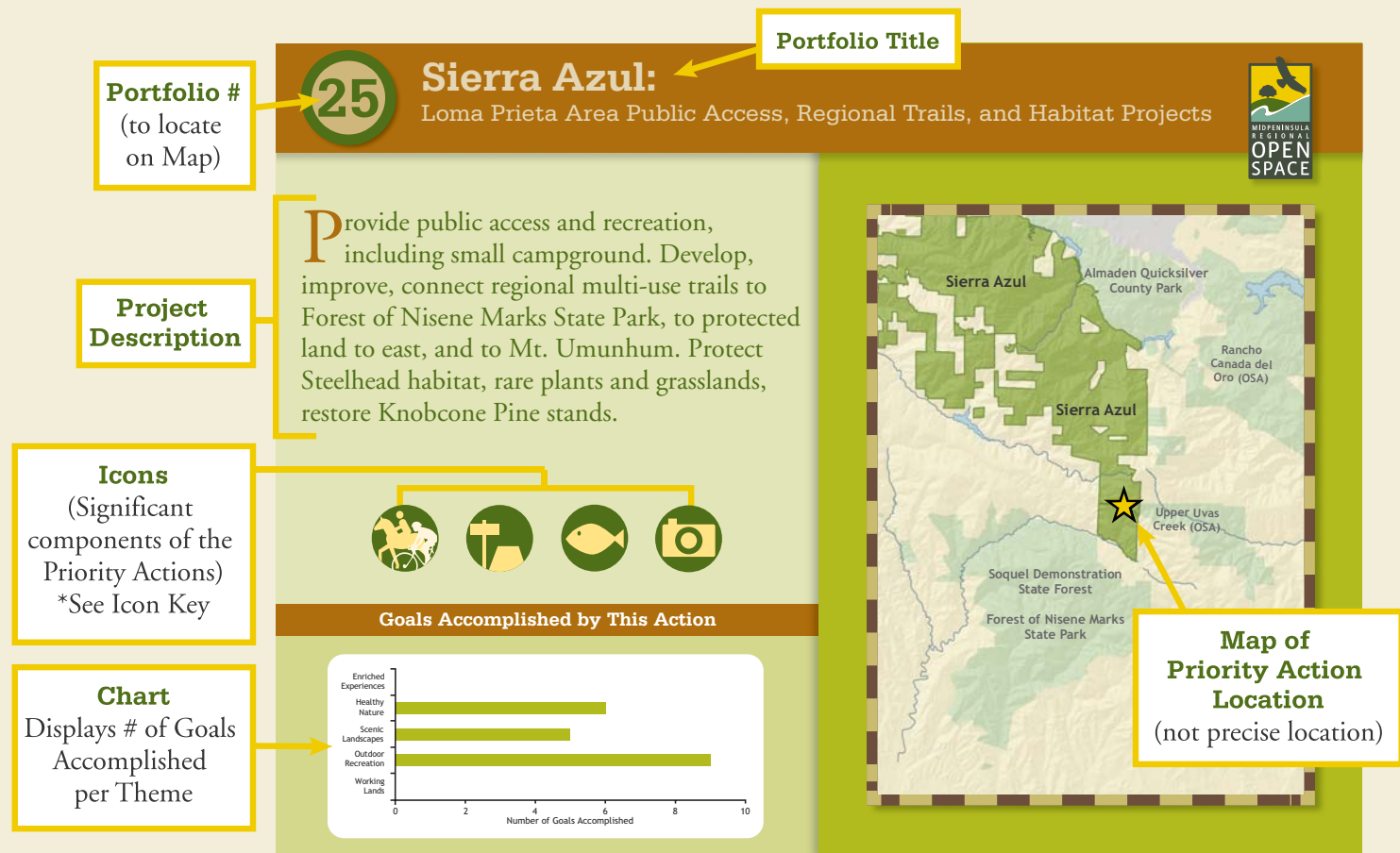


Figure 5.1: How to Use the Priority Action Profile

*The Top 25 priority actions represent the natural landscapes where the return on investment is highest and public interest is the greatest.*



## Key to Priority Action Icons

These icons illustrate the main components of the priority actions. For example, if a priority action contains icon number 1, improving access to trails is a significant part of that action.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  <p><b>1. Improves access to trails</b></p>   |  <p><b>9. Ensures clean streams and water bodies</b></p>           |
|  <p><b>2. Supports multiple trail uses (hiking, biking, horseback riding, dogs)</b></p> |  <p><b>10. Protects and manages forests</b></p>                    |
|  <p><b>3. Family friendly location</b></p>  |  <p><b>11. Reduces fire risk</b></p>                               |
|  <p><b>4. Extends regional trails</b></p>   |  <p><b>12. Provides environmental education</b></p>                |
|  <p><b>5. Eliminates barriers to using open space</b></p>                              |  <p><b>13. Protects beautiful scenery and panoramic views</b></p> |
|  <p><b>6. Protects endangered species</b></p>   |  <p><b>14. Preserves local character and sense of place</b></p>  |
|  <p><b>7. Restores natural conditions for plants and animals</b></p>                  |  <p><b>15. Conserves additional open space</b></p>               |
|  <p><b>8. Environmental stewardship and maintenance</b></p>                           |  <p><b>16. Protects local farms and ranches</b></p>              |

Figure 5.2: Key to Priority Action Icons

# 1

## Miramontes Ridge:

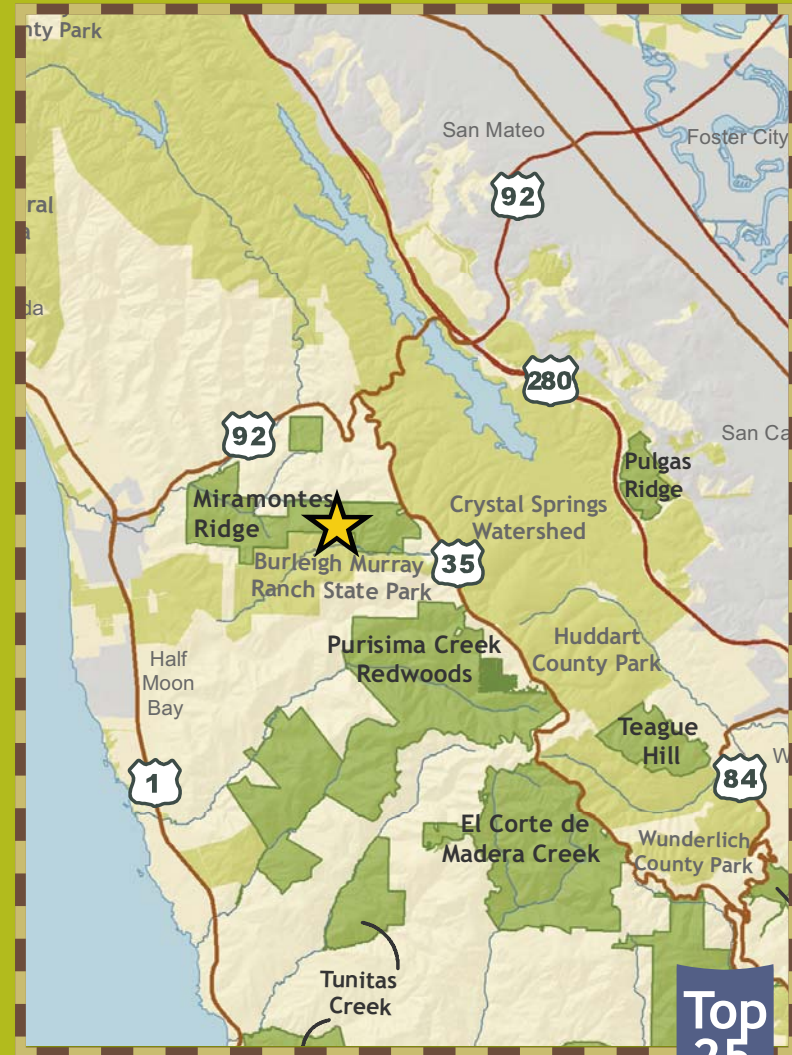
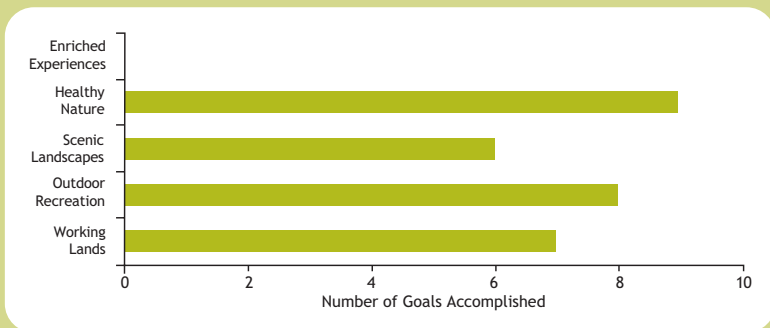
Gateway to the San Mateo Coast Public Access, Stream Restoration, and Agriculture Enhancement Projects



Preserve scenic open space as land is available, and establish wildlife corridor. Restore fish and red-legged frog habitats in Madonna Creek watershed. With partners, enhance water availability for agriculture and fish. Continue & enhance conservation grazing to sustain grasslands; improve fencing. Develop trail loop system, including Ridge Trail and neighborhood access points. Develop staging area, repair bridges.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Enhance conservation grazing at  
Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve



Courtesy Peninsula Open Space Trust © Robert Biederman

# 2

## Regional:

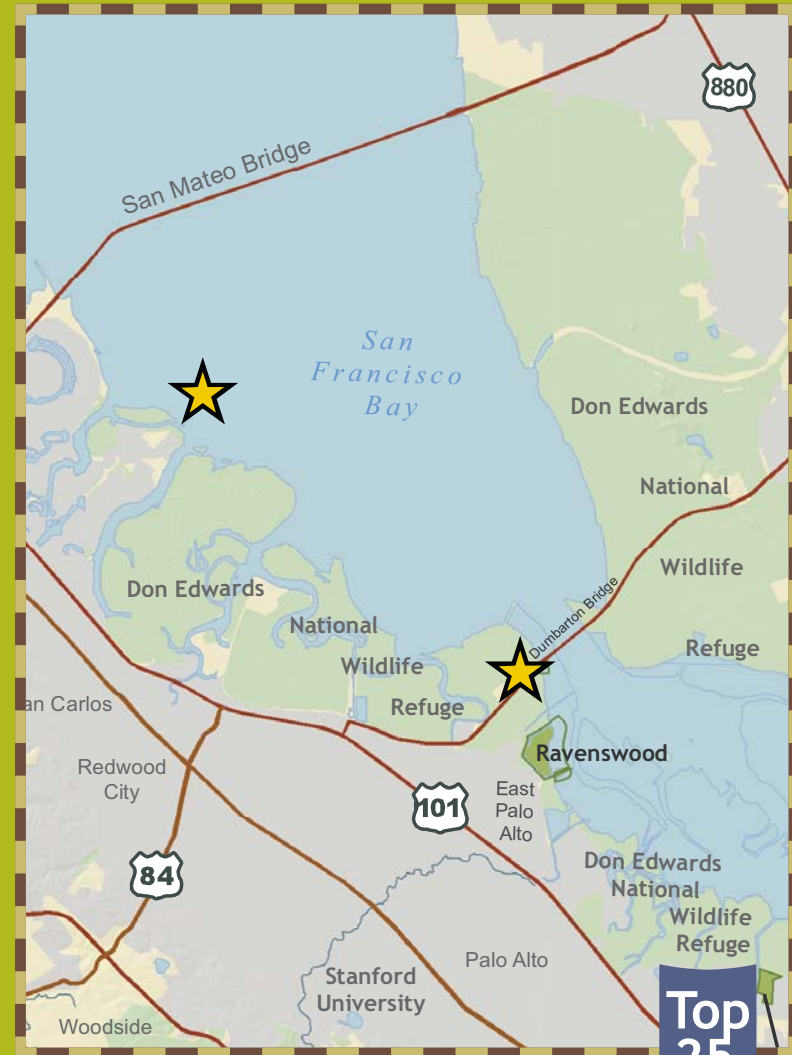
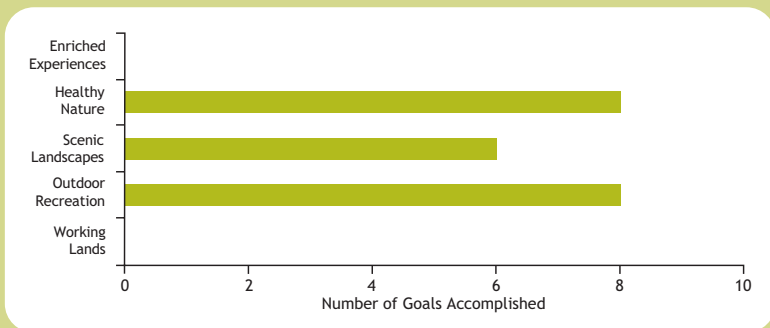
### Bayfront Habitat Protection and Public Access Partnerships



Partner to complete gaps in Bay Trail and develop city-to-bay trails. Ensure flood control projects accommodate trail access. Monitor bayfront development proposals to ensure trails and wetland restoration. Support and encourage partner wetland restoration. Collaborate to preserve additional bayfront open space as available.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Top 25

Encourage wetland restoration  
along the bayfront



# 3

## Purisima Creek Redwoods:

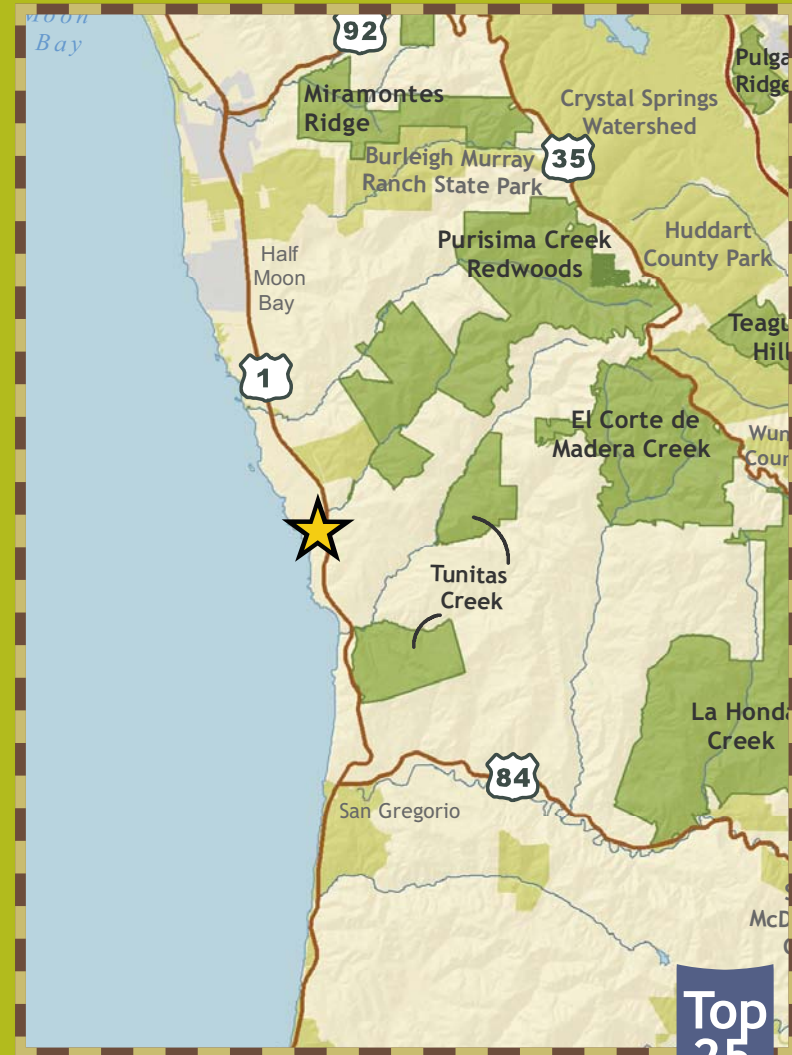
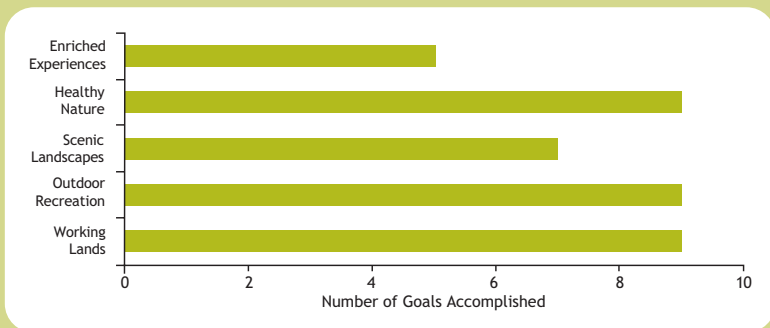
Purisima-to-Sea Trail Completion, Watershed Protection & Conservation Grazing Projects



Complete and open multi-use Purisima-to-Sea trail connection between Ridge Trail & Coastal Trail, add new parking areas. Preserve additional open space as available. Remove fish barriers and restore Lobitos Creek. Study & improve ponds for red-legged frogs. Continue grazing, improve fencing, cattle watering to protect ponds and streams. Develop interpretive materials and volunteer steward program.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Complete Purisima-to-the-Sea trail at  
Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve



Sandy Sommer

# 4

## El Corte de Madera Creek:

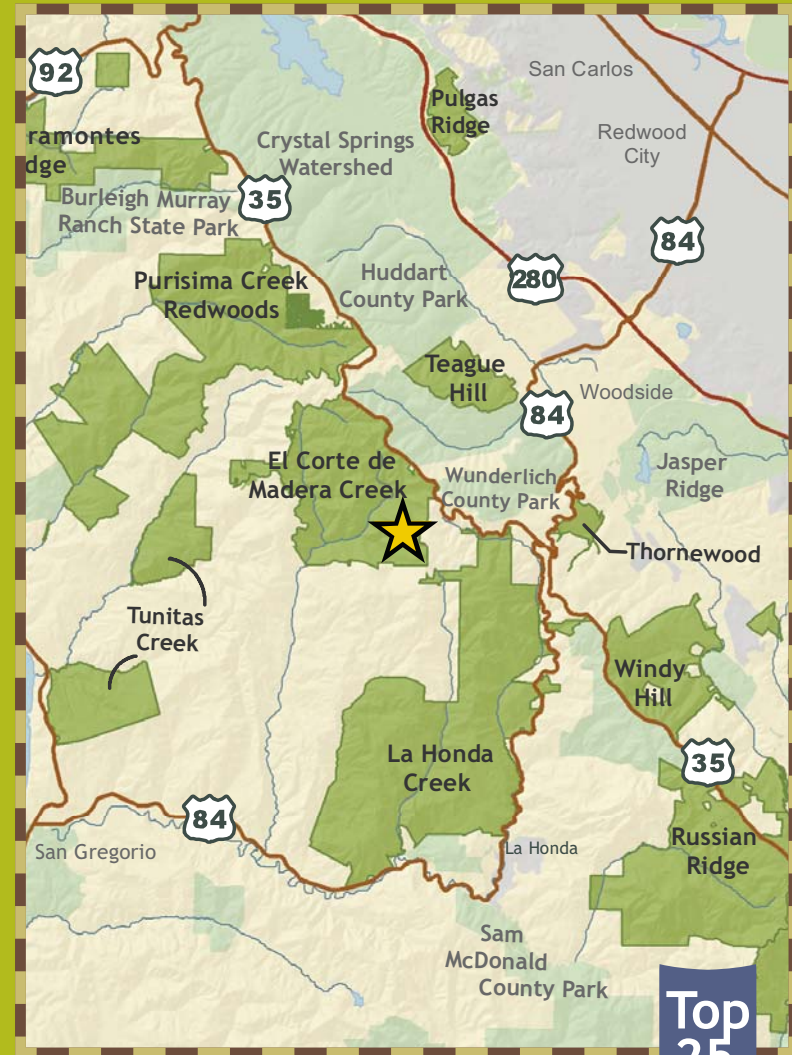
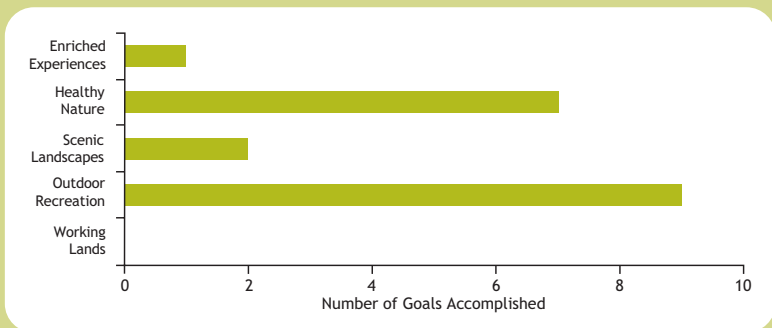
Bike Trail and Water Quality Projects



Develop and carry out plans for single-use biking/hiking trails, complete Ridge Trail gaps, and develop trail system leading to parking area. Restore damaged trails for better water quality. Deter marbled murrelet predators. Preserve additional open space as available.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Restore damaged trails at El Corte  
de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve

Midpen Staff



# 5

## La Honda Creek:

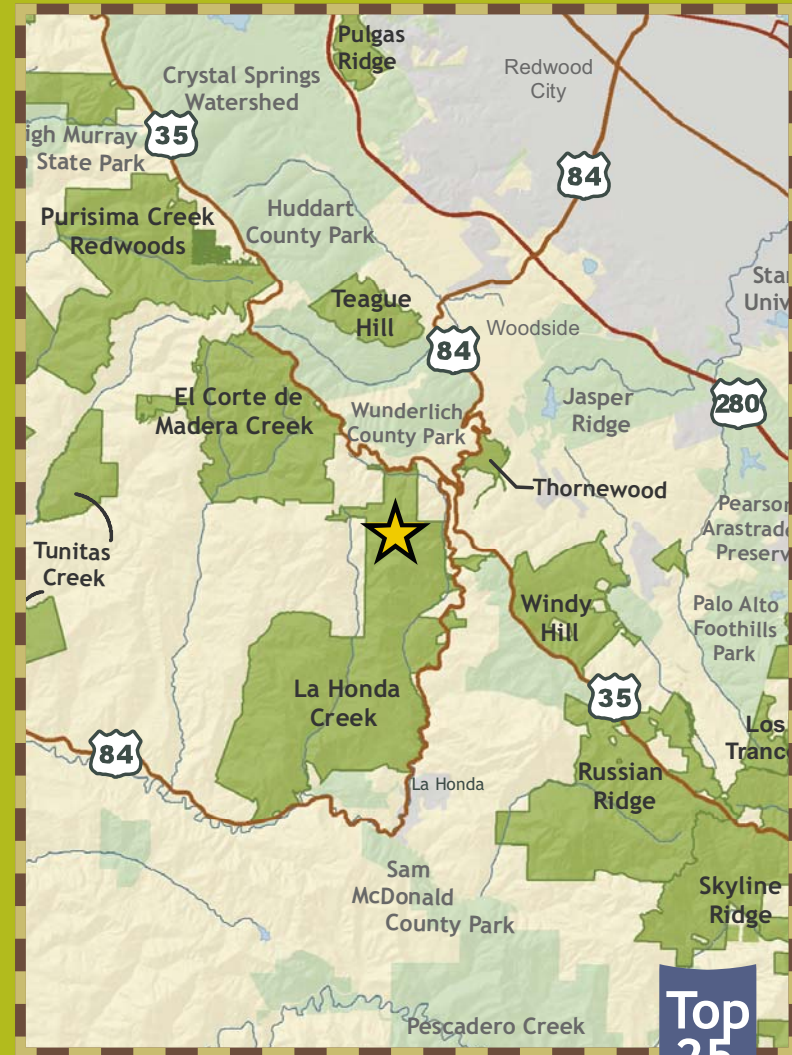
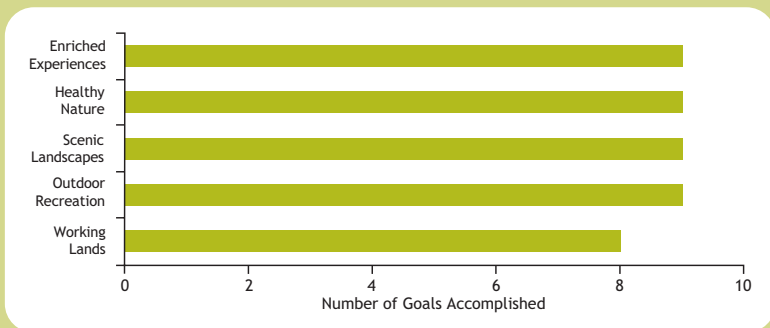
Upper Area Recreation, Habitat Restoration, and Conservation Grazing Projects



Open Upper Area; provide biking/hiking trails, dog access, staging areas. Develop Red Barn area as educational destination. Plan new activities such as night hikes, community events. Provide loop & connector trails. Improve habitat for rare species. Expand conservation grazing to manage grasslands; improve fencing, cattle watering methods to protect streams.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Provide public access to the upper area  
of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve



Randy Weber

# 6

## Windy Hill:

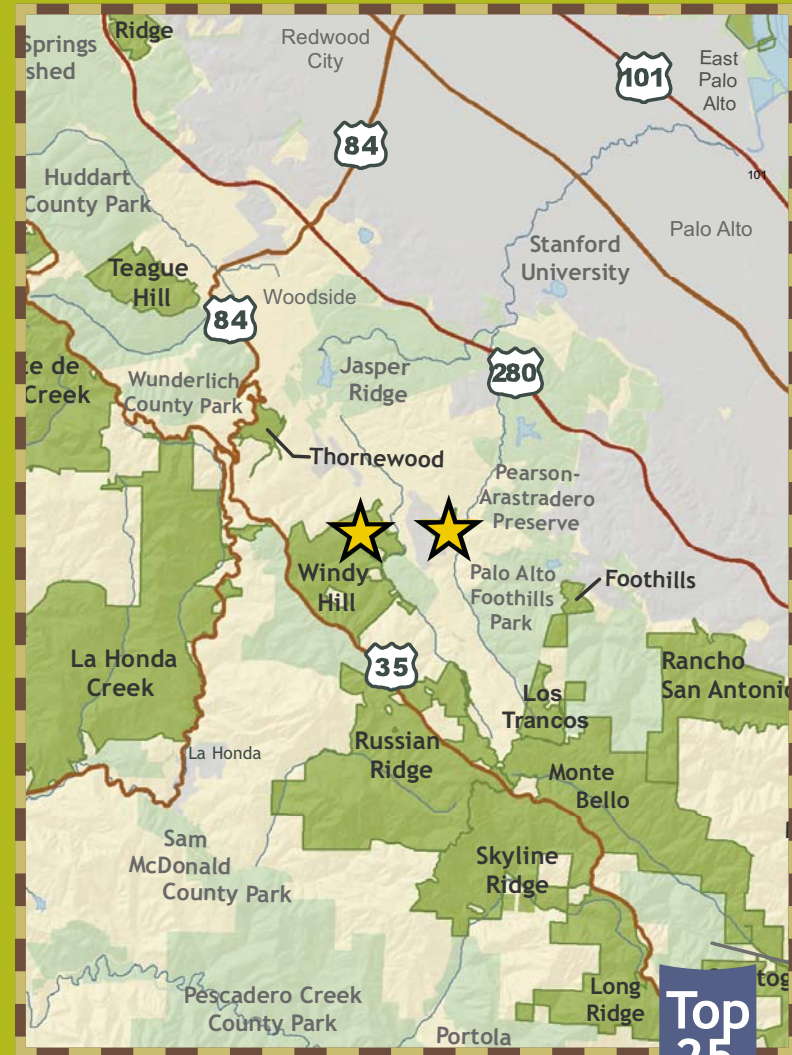
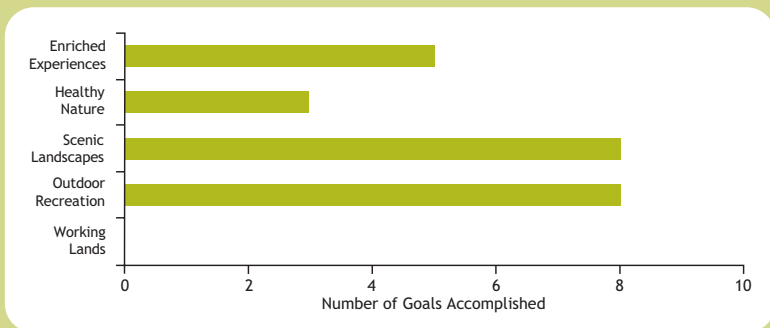
Trail Improvements, Preservation, and Hawthorns Area Historic Partnership



Improve trails, complete pond facilities. Increase multi-use trails, study possible increased dog use. Open Hawthorns Area, develop trails connecting to Portola Valley and Palo Alto trails. Explore partnerships to protect, restore, and interpret historic buildings. Improve habitat conditions in Los Trancos Creek. Preserve additional scenic open space as available.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Top 25

Increase multi-use trails and preserve additional scenic open space at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve



# 7

## La Honda Creek:

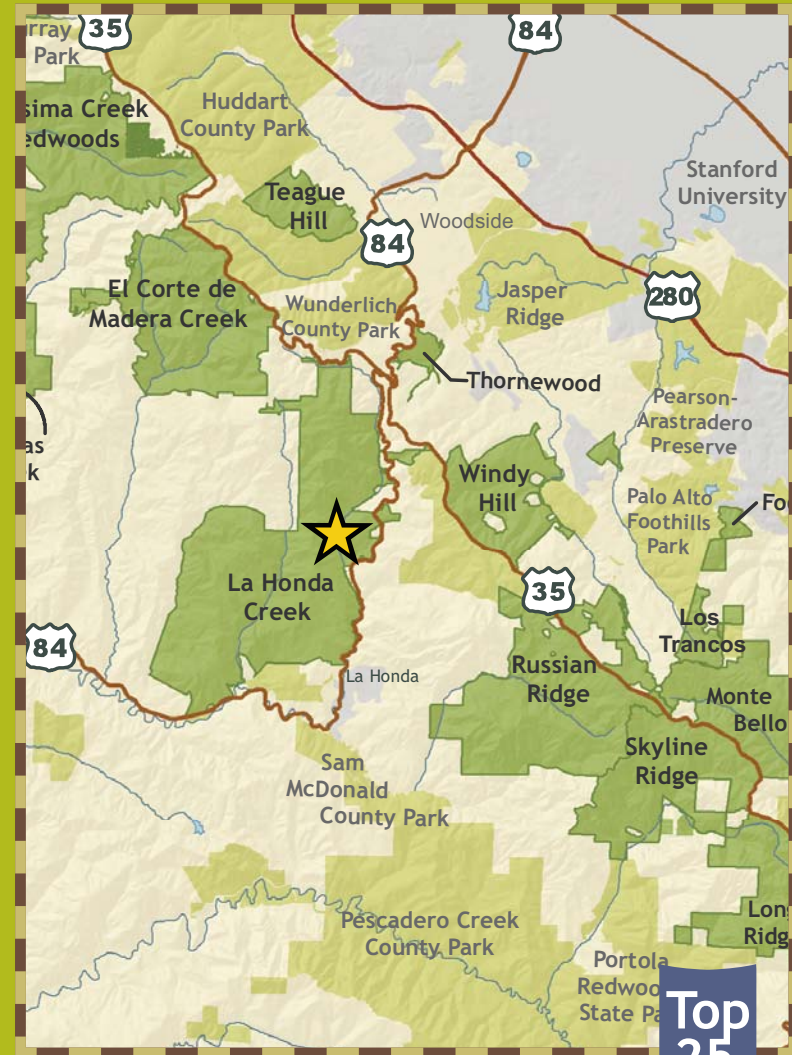
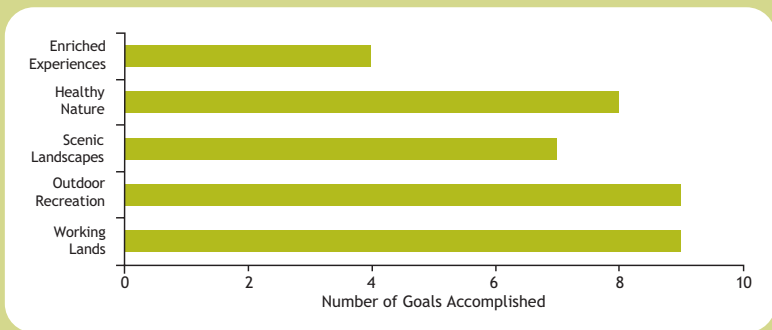
Driscoll Ranch Area Public Access, Endangered Wildlife Protection, and Conservation Grazing Projects



Open Driscoll Ranch Area, provide biking/hiking trails, limited dog access, parking areas, interpretive materials. Provide loop & connector trails. Improve habitat for red-legged frogs. Restore La Honda Creek; remove fish migration barriers. Develop volunteer restoration program. Continue conservation grazing to manage grasslands; improve fencing, corrals, cattle watering methods. Develop and introduce fire management strategies to reduce fuel & fire risk.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Top 25



Provide improved equestrian, biking, and hiking trails at Driscoll Ranch area of La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve



# 8

## La Honda Creek/Russian Ridge:

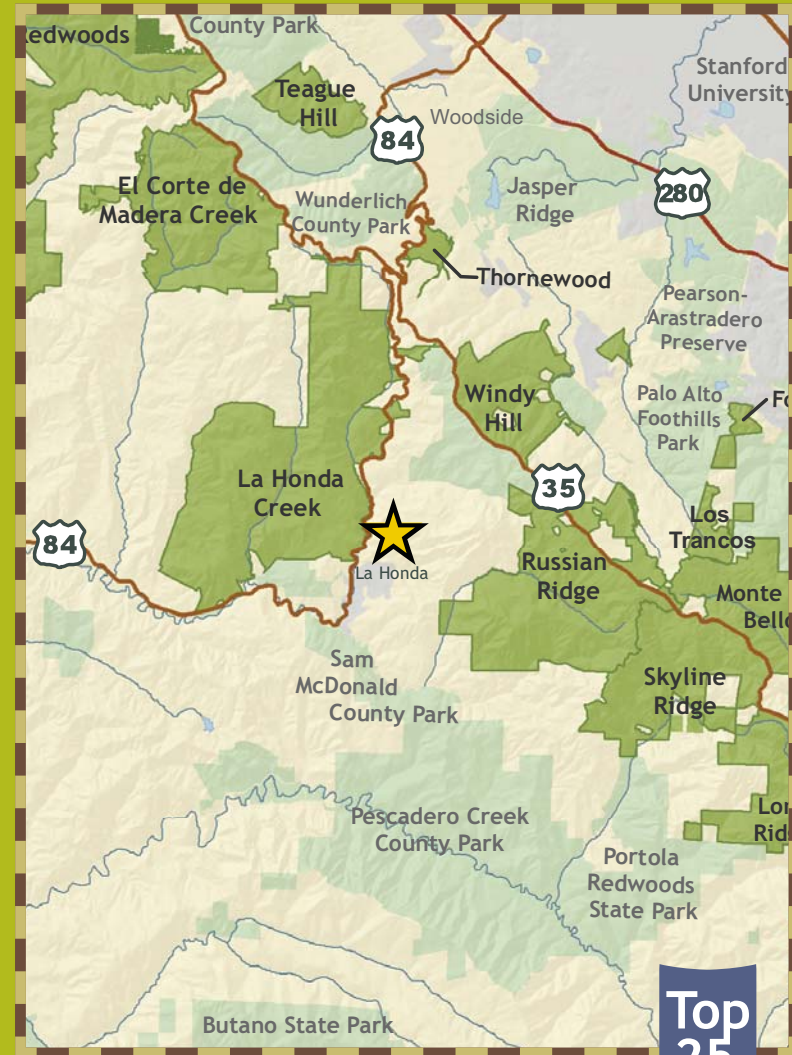
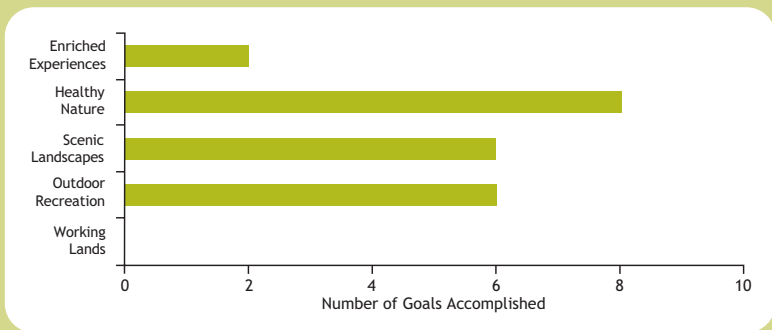
Preservation of Upper San Gregorio Watershed and Ridge Trail Completion



Preserve upper San Gregorio watershed as available; promote salmon, red-legged frog habitats. Pursue water use changes to provide water for fisheries. Complete Bay Area Ridge Trail multi-use connections and gaps, study possible camping along trail.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 9

## Russian Ridge:

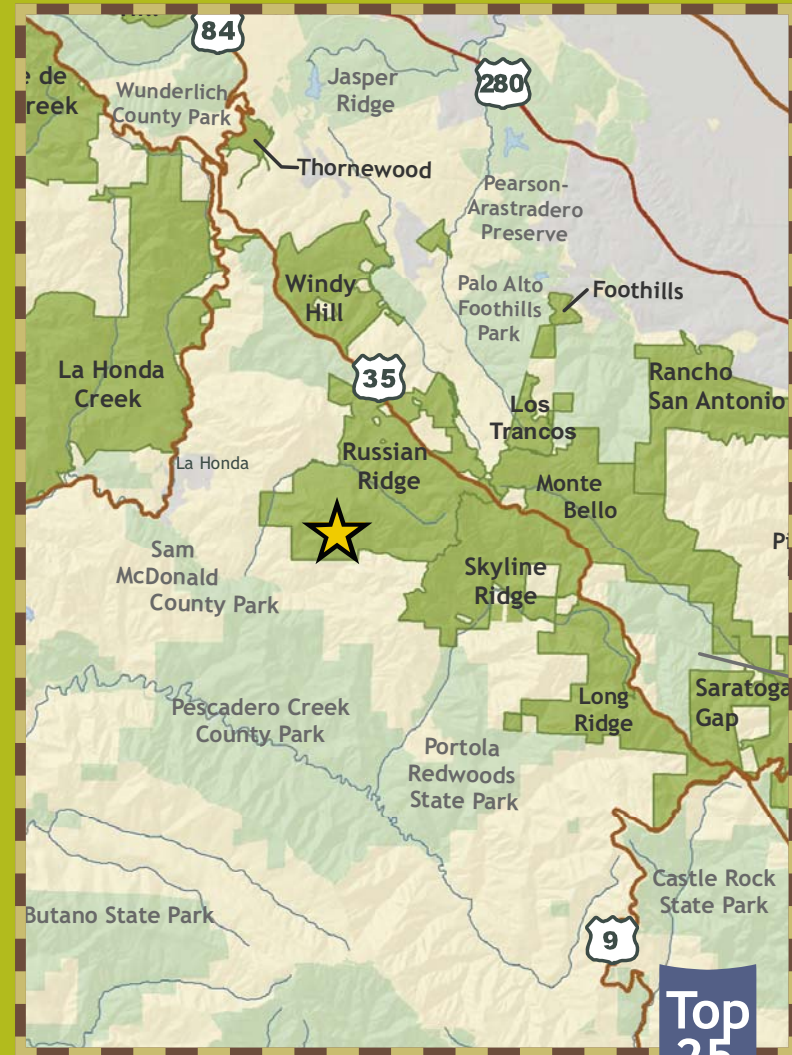
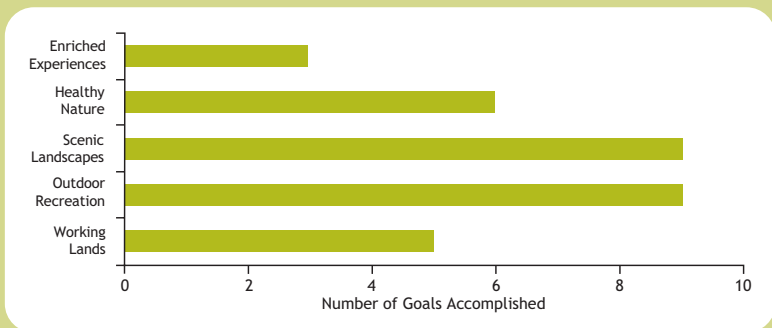
Public Recreation, Grazing, and Wildlife Protection Projects



Open currently closed areas of preserve. Construct and extend trails, provide interpretive services/materials about history at Mindego Ranch, Native American uses. Reintroduce grazing, improve fencing and watering. Improve native habitat for sensitive species, carry out pond enhancement projects for garter snakes and red-legged frogs.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Extend trails and reintroduce grazing  
at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve



Erica Simmons

# 10

## Coal Creek:

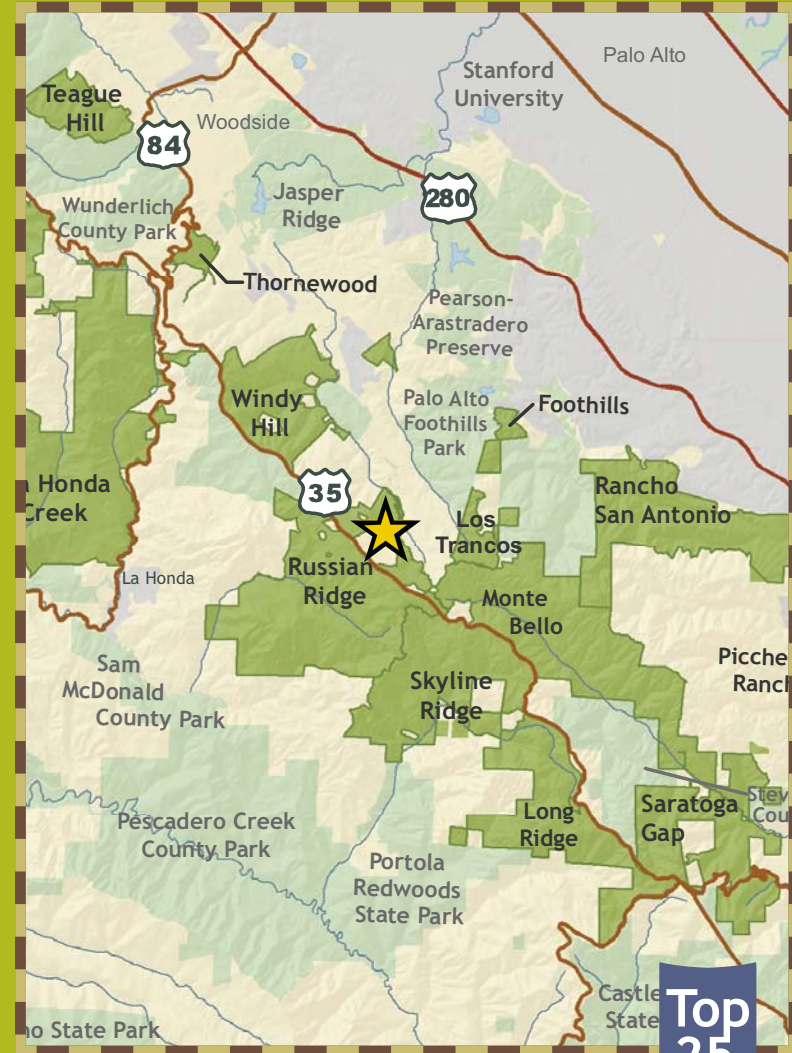
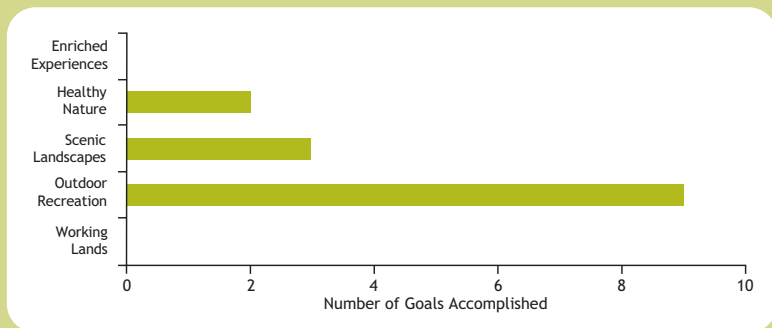
Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use



Reopen Alpine Road as trail connection between Portola Valley & Skyline Blvd. Reroute trails to reduce erosion, improve visitor experience.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Reopen Alpine Road as a trail at  
Coal Creek Open Space Preserve

Jack Gosholt



# 11

## Rancho San Antonio:

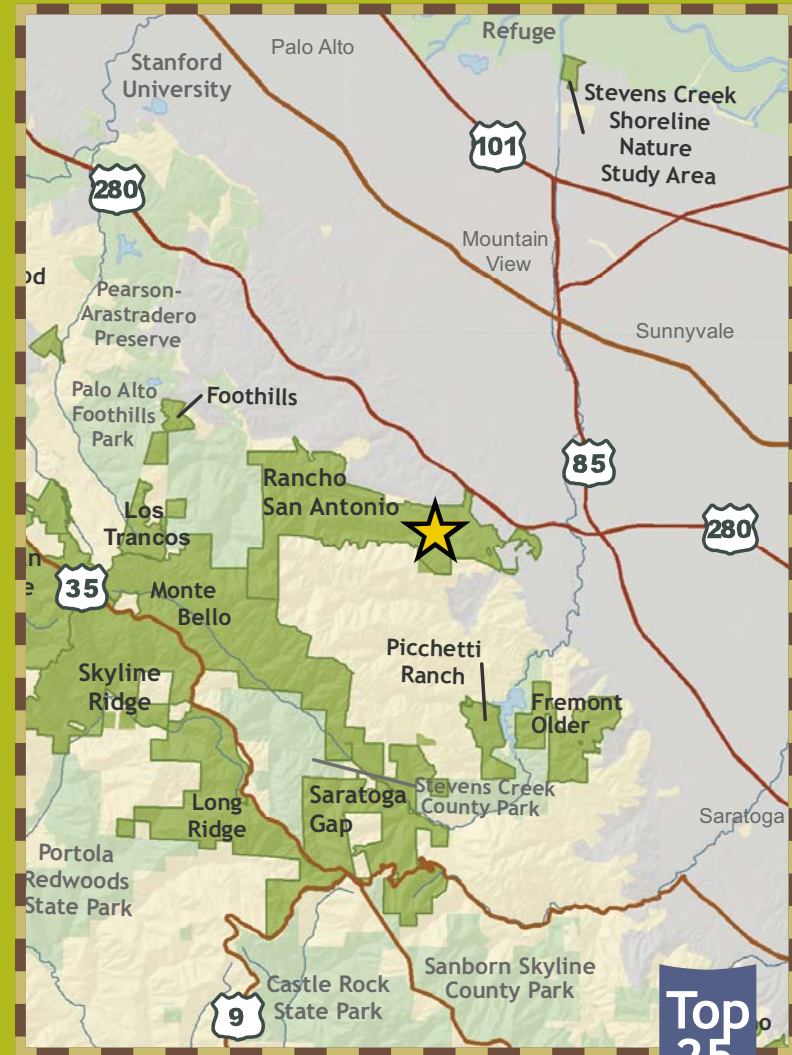
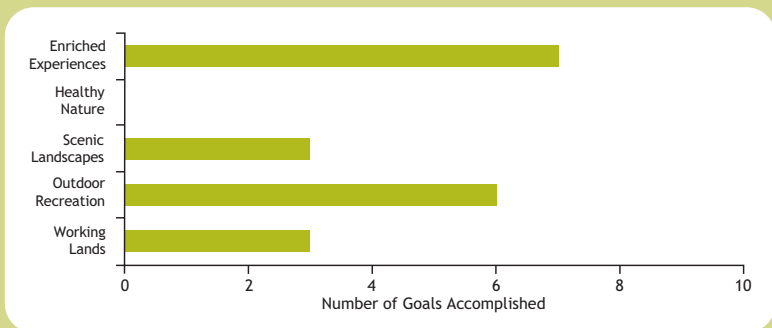
Interpretive Improvements, Refurbishing, and Transit Solutions



Add welcome center, refurbish and add interpretive features to existing Deer Hollow Farm. Explore transit options such as extending bike trails, bikeshare station, or bus service.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Add welcome center at Rancho  
San Antonio Open Space Preserve

Karl Gohl



# 12

## Peninsula and South Bay Cities:

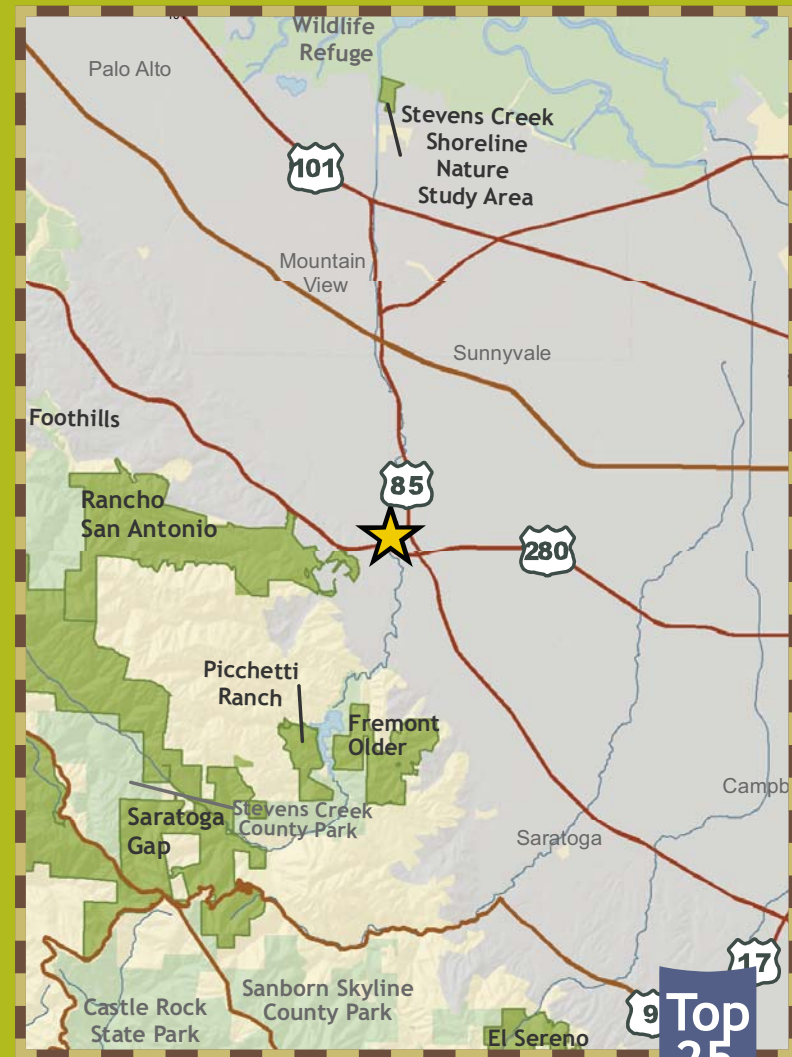
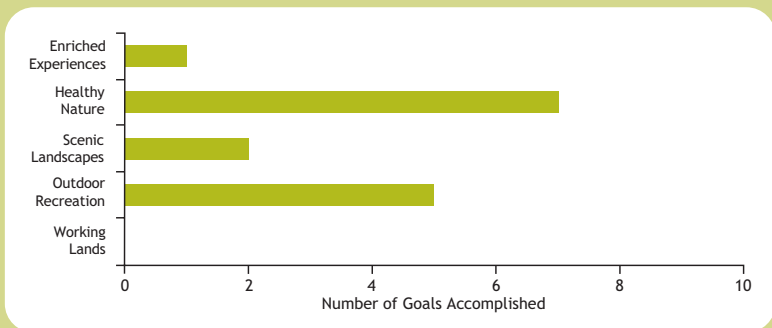
Partner to Complete Middle Stevens Creek Trail



Support work by cities to develop the middle section of the Stevens Creek Trail and enhance neighborhood connections. Encourage stream corridor restoration and steelhead habitat enhancement below dam. Develop interpretive signage.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



9 Top 25



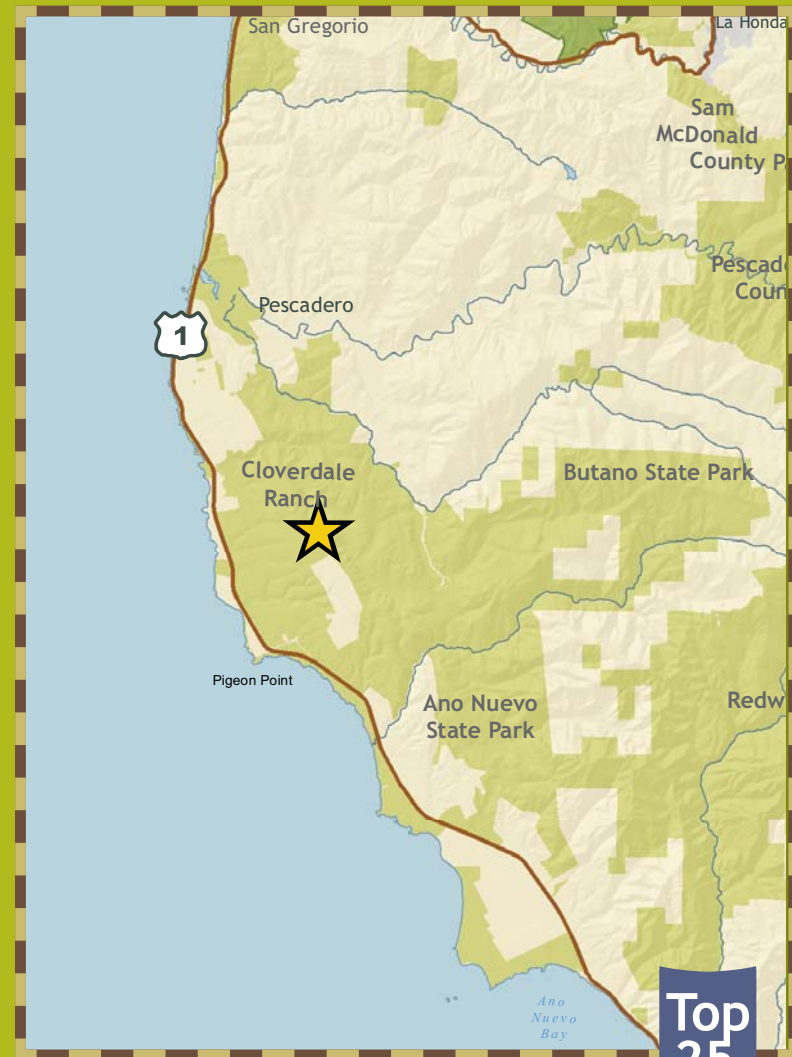
# 13

## Cloverdale Ranch:

Wildlife Protection, Grazing, and Trail Connections

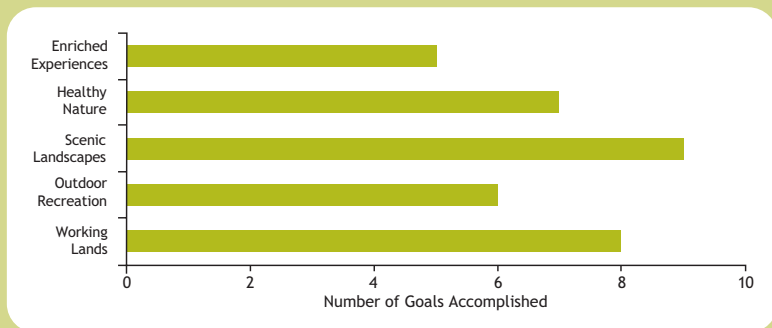


Continue & enhance conservation grazing to sustain large contiguous grasslands. Improve habitat for red-legged frog, steelhead salmon, SF garter snake. Explore use of traditional Native American land stewardship. Provide trail connections to nearby State parks. Develop agricultural interpretive program.



Top 25

### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Enhance conservation grazing at  
Cloverdale ranch on the San Mateo coast

# 14

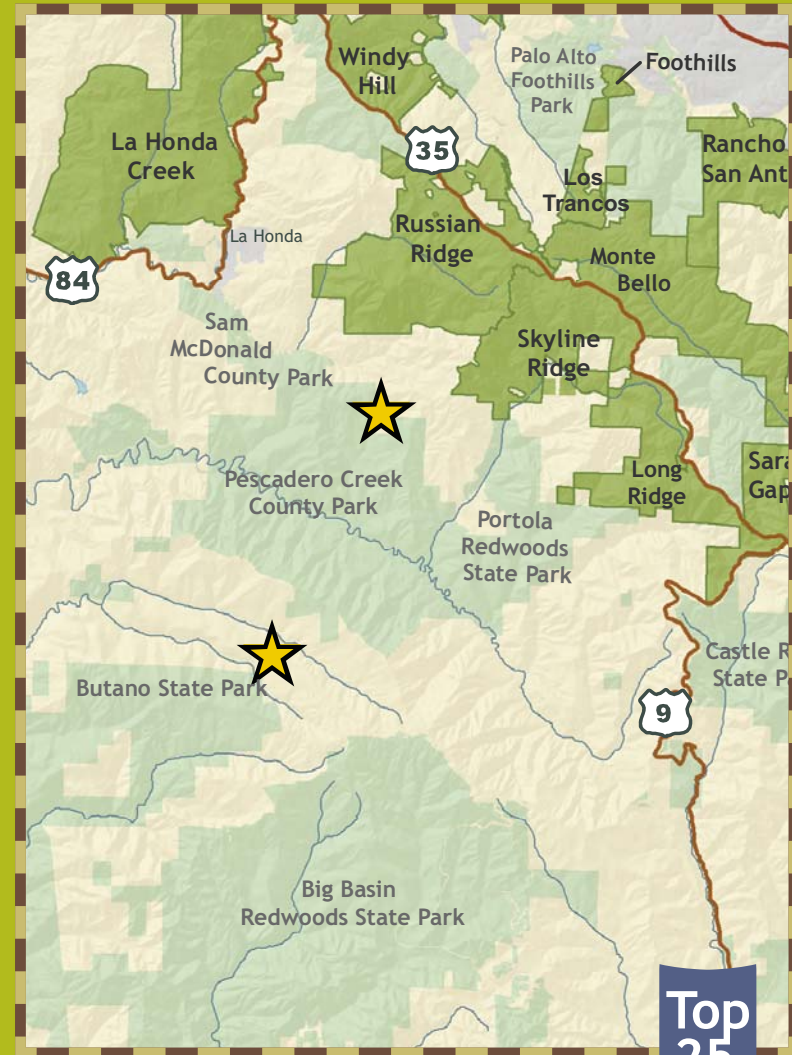
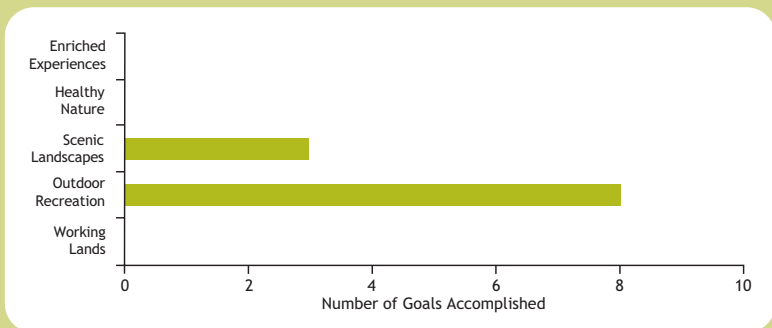
## Regional: Trail Connections and Campgrounds



Develop trails between Butano, Pescadero County Park, Pescadero, Russian Ridge, & between Skyline and Portola Redwoods, Big Basin State Park. Encourage County and State Parks to improve existing campgrounds.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 15

## Regional:

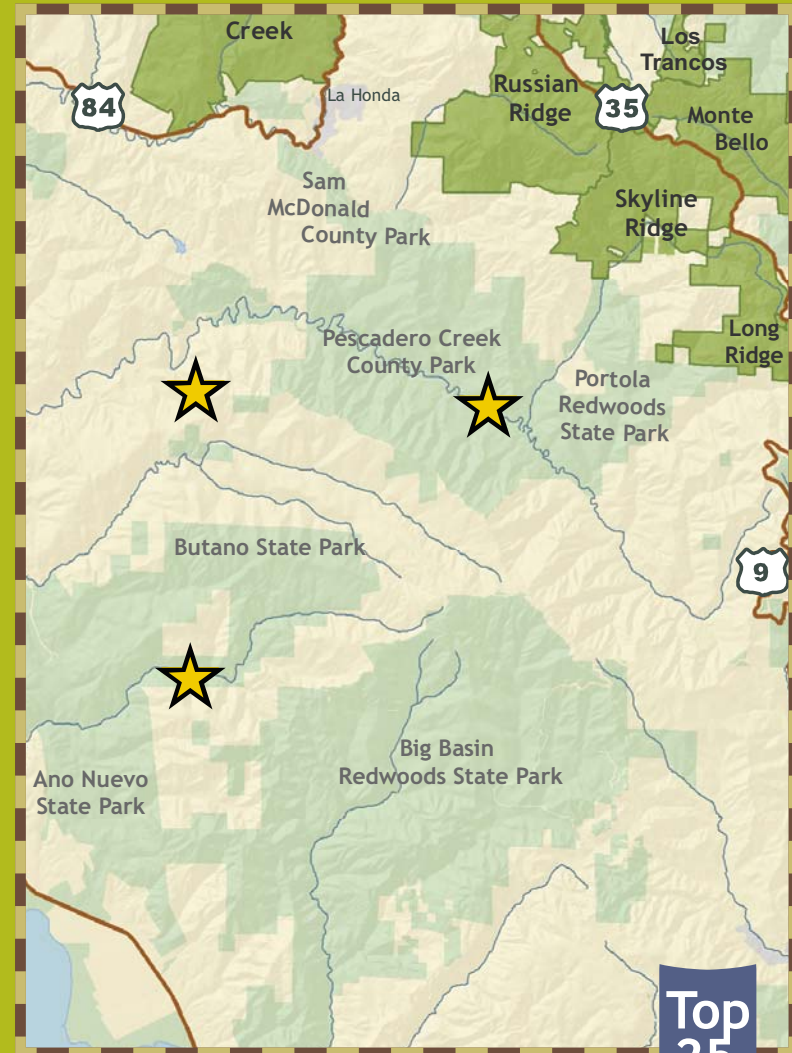
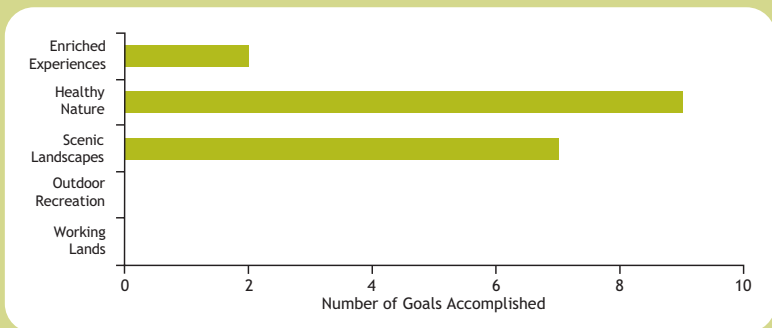
### Redwood Protection and Salmon Fishery Conservation



Preserve additional open space as land is available. Protect and promote redwood stands, mountain scenery, various habitats including salmon. Deter marbled murrelet predators. Develop educational materials about Pescadero Watershed.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Protect redwood stands in the Santa Cruz Mountains

Karl Gohl



# 16

## Long Ridge:

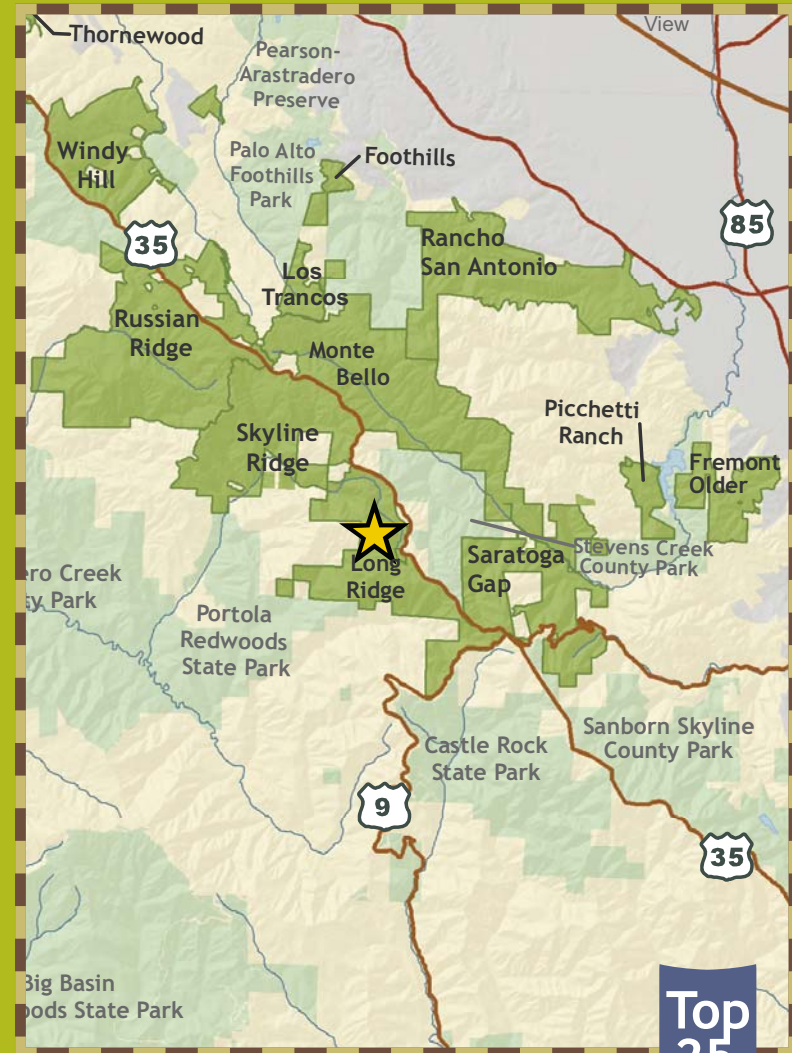
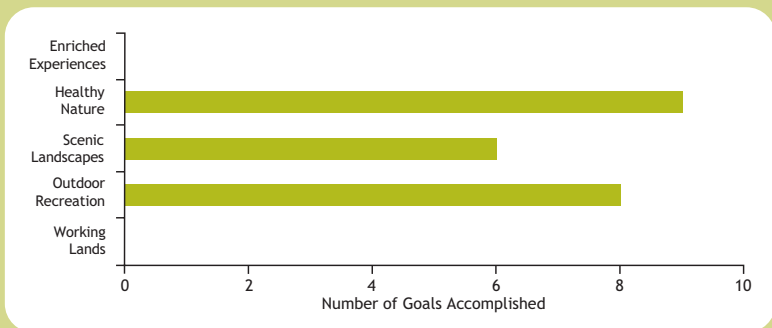
Trail, Conservation, and Habitat Restoration Projects



Improve roadside parking and provide restrooms. Develop new trail connections to Eagle Rock & Devils Canyon. Repair trails for year-round multi-use access. Protect watersheds for steelhead. Preserve additional open space as available. Implement pond management and habitat enhancement projects to benefit rare species.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Develop new trails and protect watersheds  
at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve

Amanda Mills



# 17

## Regional:

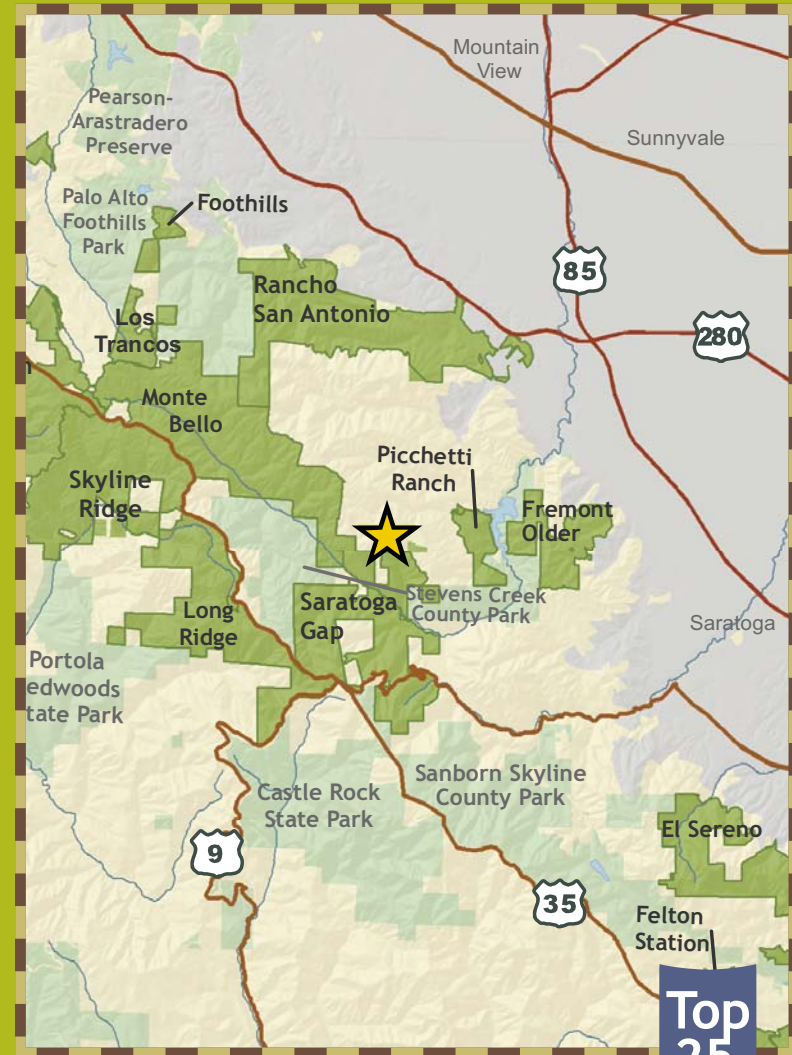
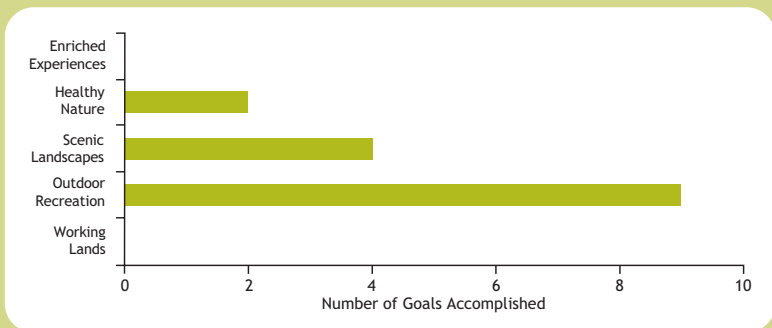
### Complete Upper Stevens Creek Trail



Complete multi-use connection between the Bay Trail & Bay Area Ridge Trail above the reservoir through Picchetti & Lower/Upper Stevens Creek County Parks. Improve Preserve trails and make neighborhood connections. Preserve additional open space as available.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# Complete upper Stevens Creek Trail

Karl Gail



# 18

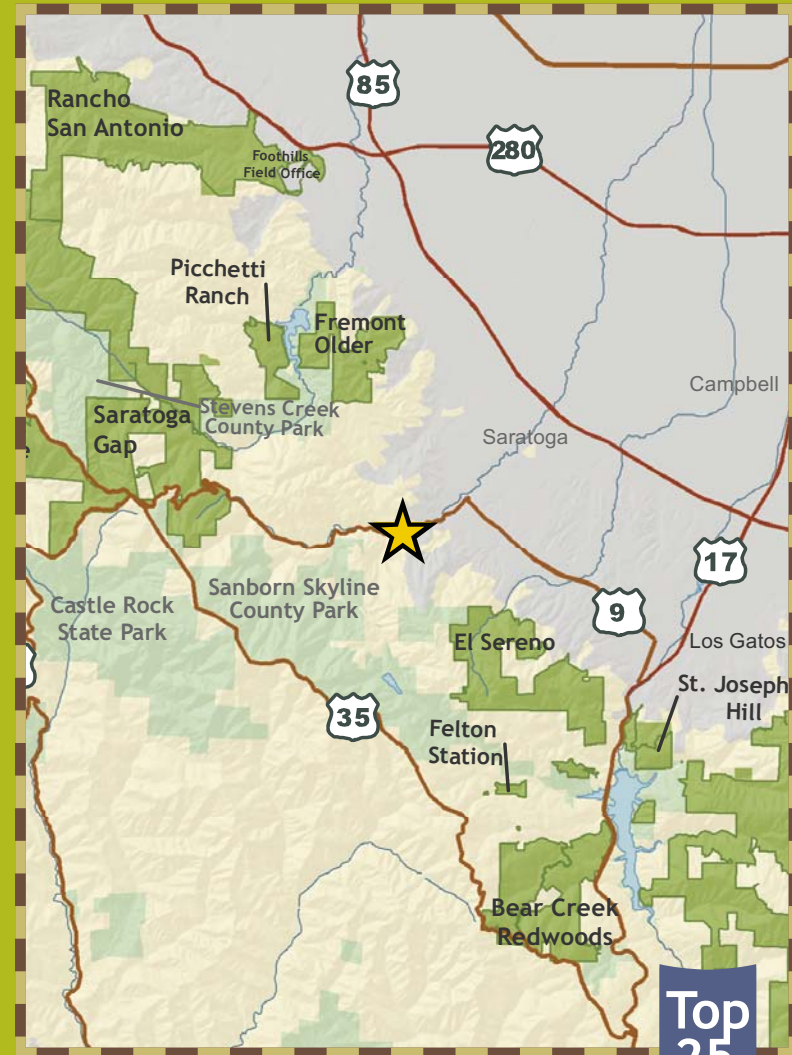
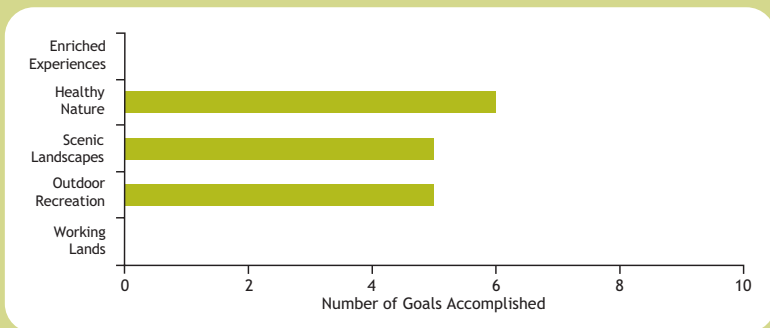
## South Bay Foothills: Saratoga-to-Sea Trail and Wildlife Corridor



Protect wildlife corridor along Hwy 9.  
Connect trail to Saratoga-to-Sea Trail  
& Skyline-to-Sea Trail.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 19

## El Sereno:

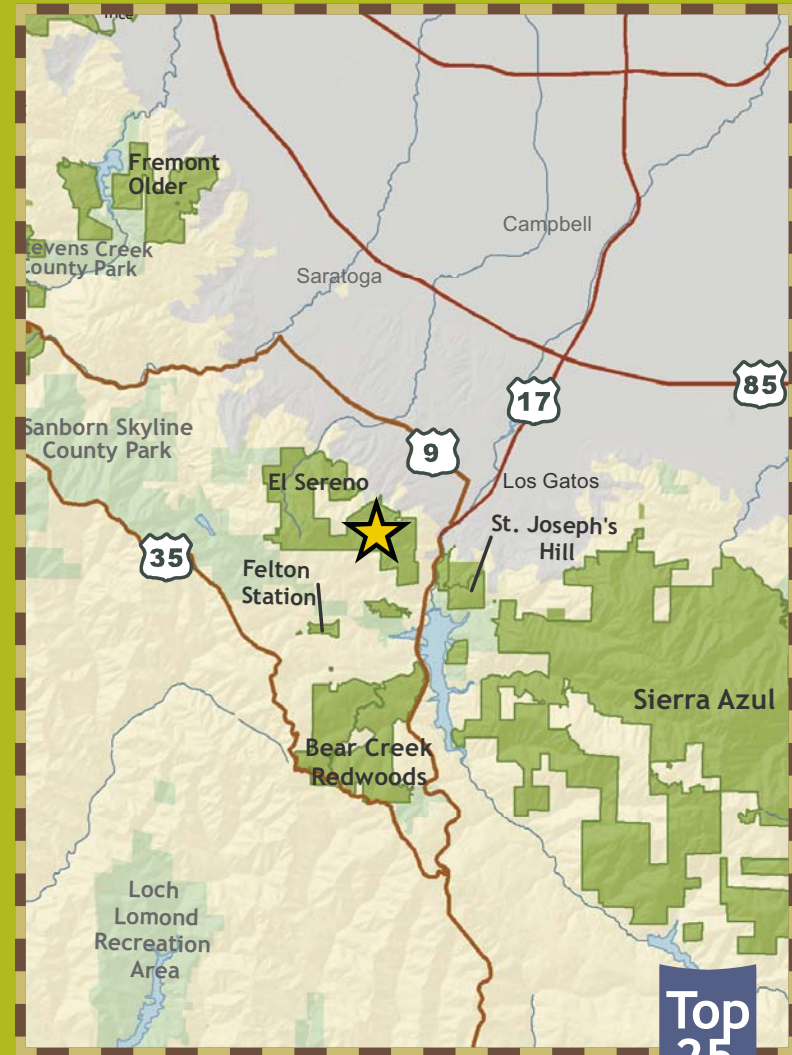
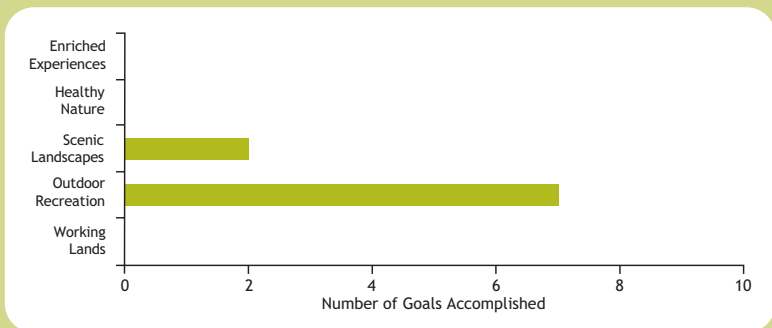
Trails that allow Dog Access and Connections



Open trails to dogs. Connect to Skyline, Sanborn County Park, & Lexington Reservoir.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Open trails at El Sereno Open Space Preserve to dog use

Jack Gresham



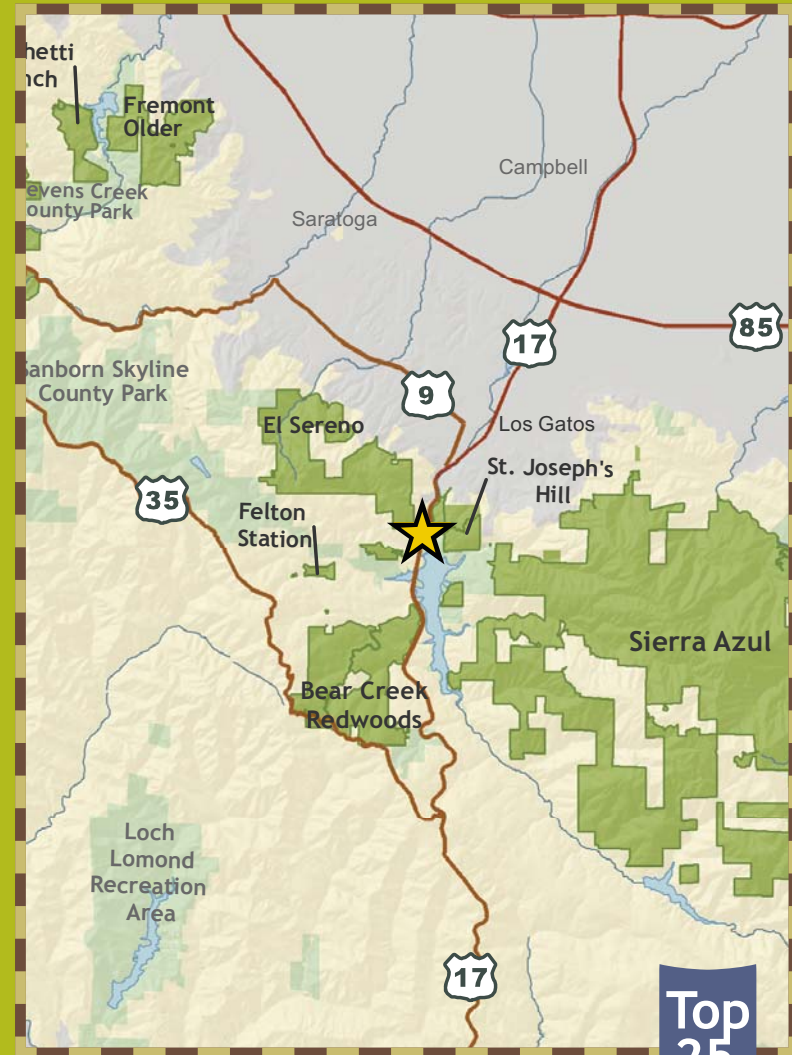
# 20

## South Bay Foothills:

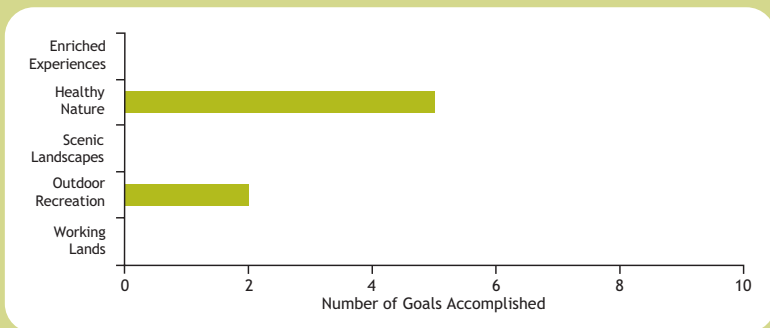
Wildlife Passage and Bay Area Ridge Trail Improvements



Provide safe corridors for mountain lions across Hwy. 17. Establish Bay Area Ridge Trail crossing.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Provide safe corridors for  
mountain lions across Highway 17



# 21

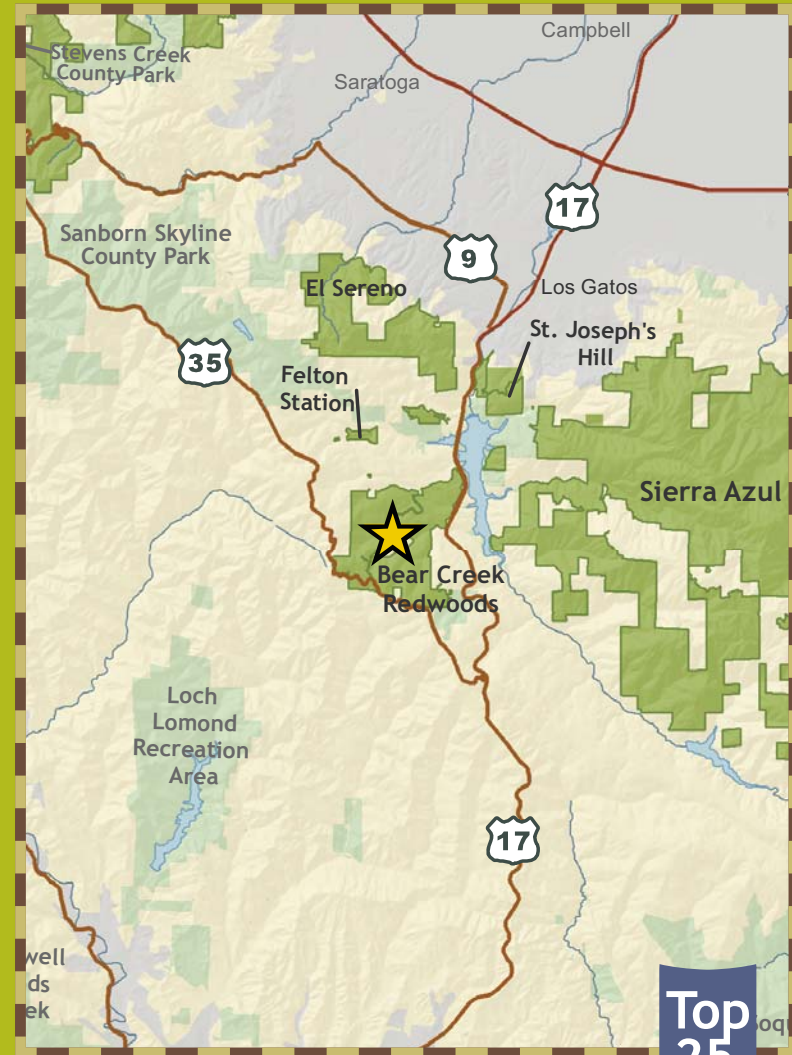
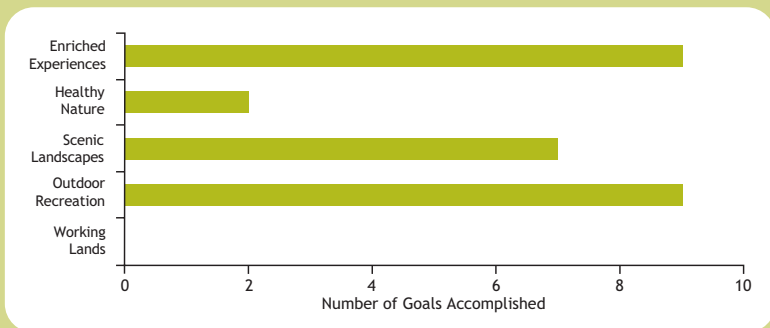
## Bear Creek Redwoods: Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects



Open for hiking, equestrian activities. Provide parking areas, trails; upgrade stables. Restore & protect habitats for various species, address invasives. Repair roads & trails to reduce sediment. Provide interpretive/educational services, volunteer programs. Rehabilitate Alma College site, explore limited reuse by public or private partners.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Open Bear Creek Redwoods Open  
Space Preserve for public recreation

David Foster



# 22

## Sierra Azul:

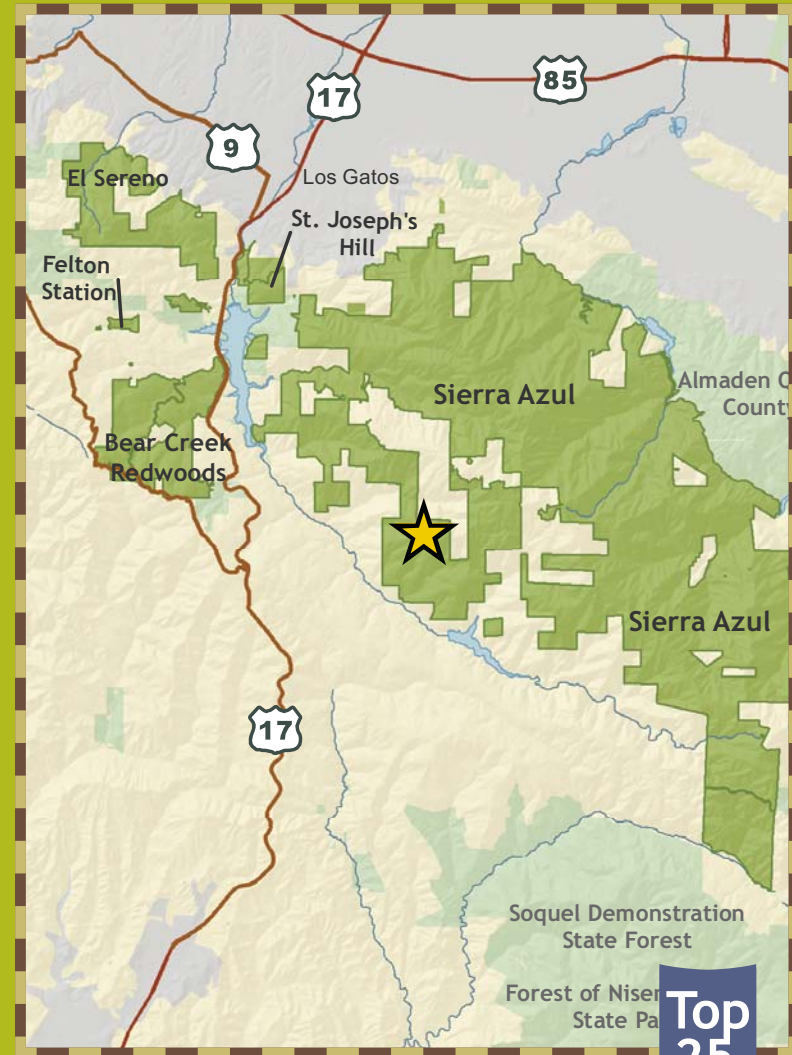
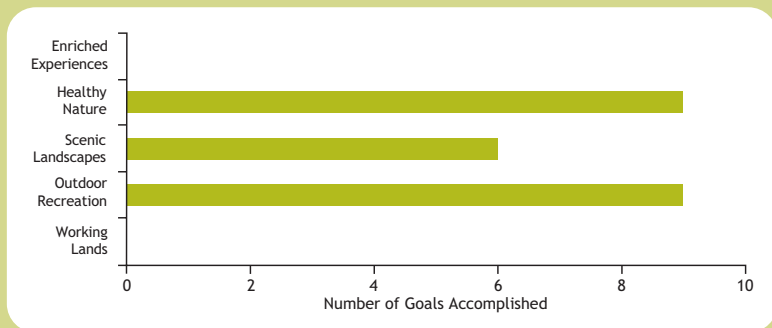
### Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects



Develop multi-use trails & plan future trails as land is available. Work with neighbors to plan parking. Protect plants, soils. Install trailside amenities. Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor in upper Los Gatos Creek watershed when possible.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Preserve upper Los Gatos Creek watershed  
at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve

Midpen Staff



# 23

## Sierra Azul:

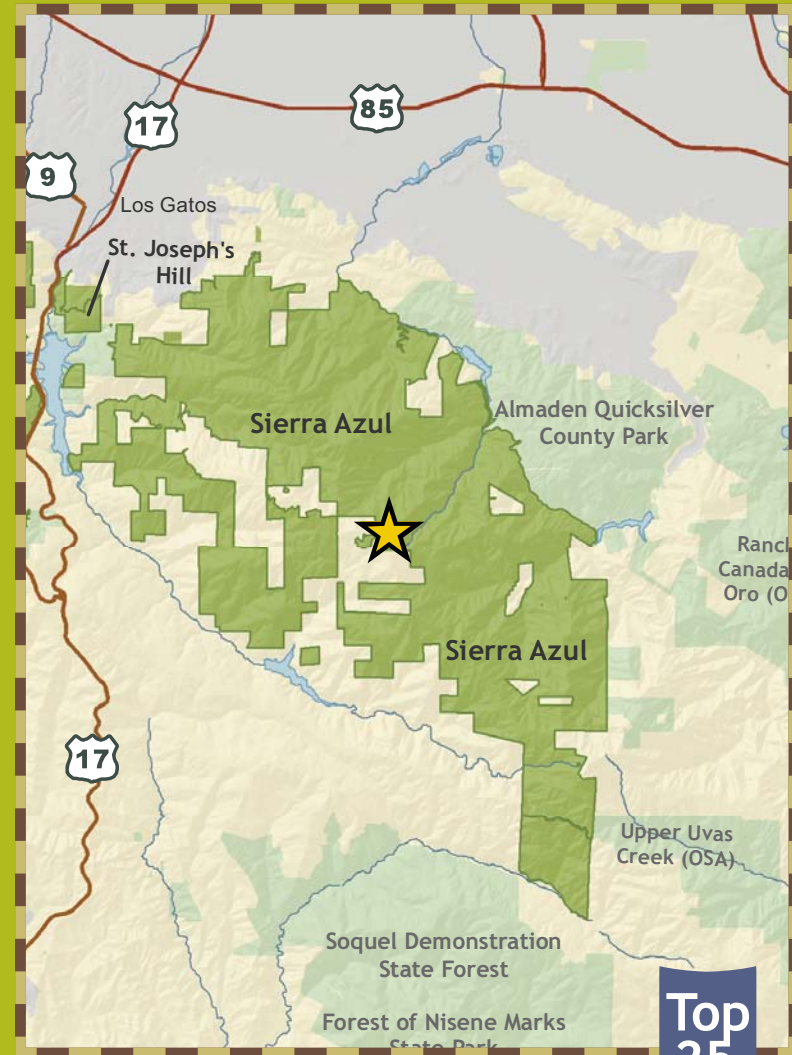
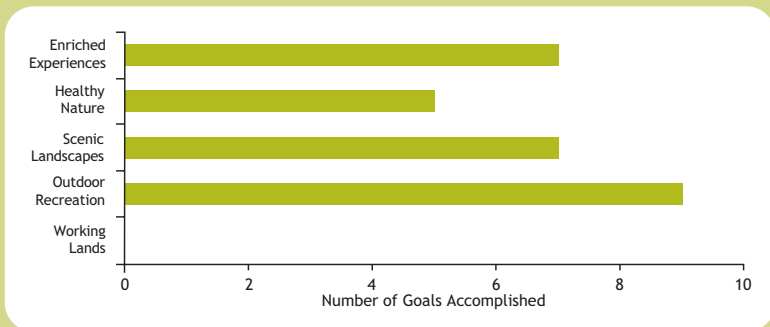
### Mt. Umunhum Public Access and Interpretation Projects



Open Mt. Umunhum for multi-use public access to summit via road and trail. Open Bay Area Ridge Trail and nearby trail connections. Develop interpretive services and educational materials, especially for school groups. Determine and carry out plan for Radar Tower. Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor as available.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action





Open Mount Umunhum and Bay Area  
Ridge Trail at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve

Midpen Staff



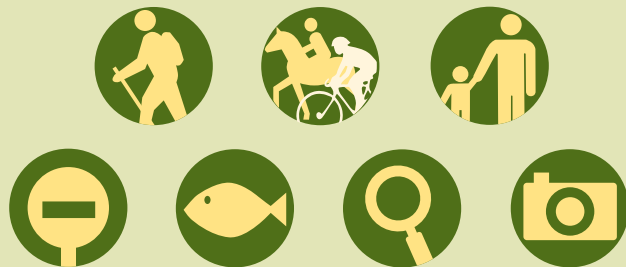
# 24

## Sierra Azul:

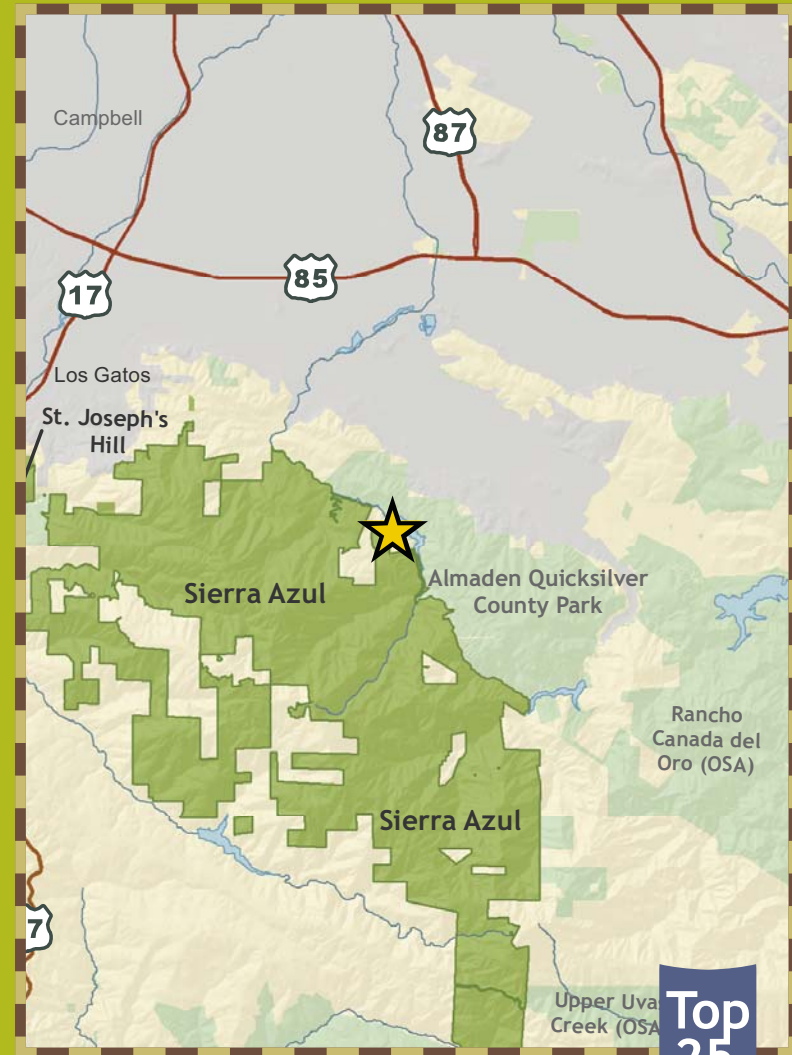
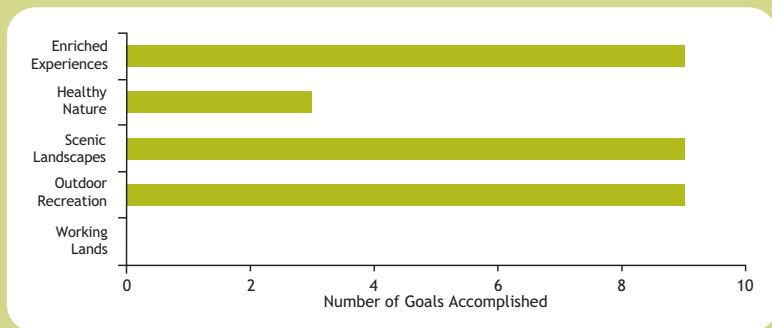
Rancho de Guadalupe Family Recreation and Interpretive Projects



Open RDG to public access. Develop accessible multi-use trails with amenities such as parking, family recreation, interpretive/educational services. Partner to develop family camping. Enhance habitat for rare species. Protect cultural and natural resources using traditional Native American stewardship practices.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Open Rancho de Guadalupe Area  
at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve

David Harp



# 25

## Sierra Azul:

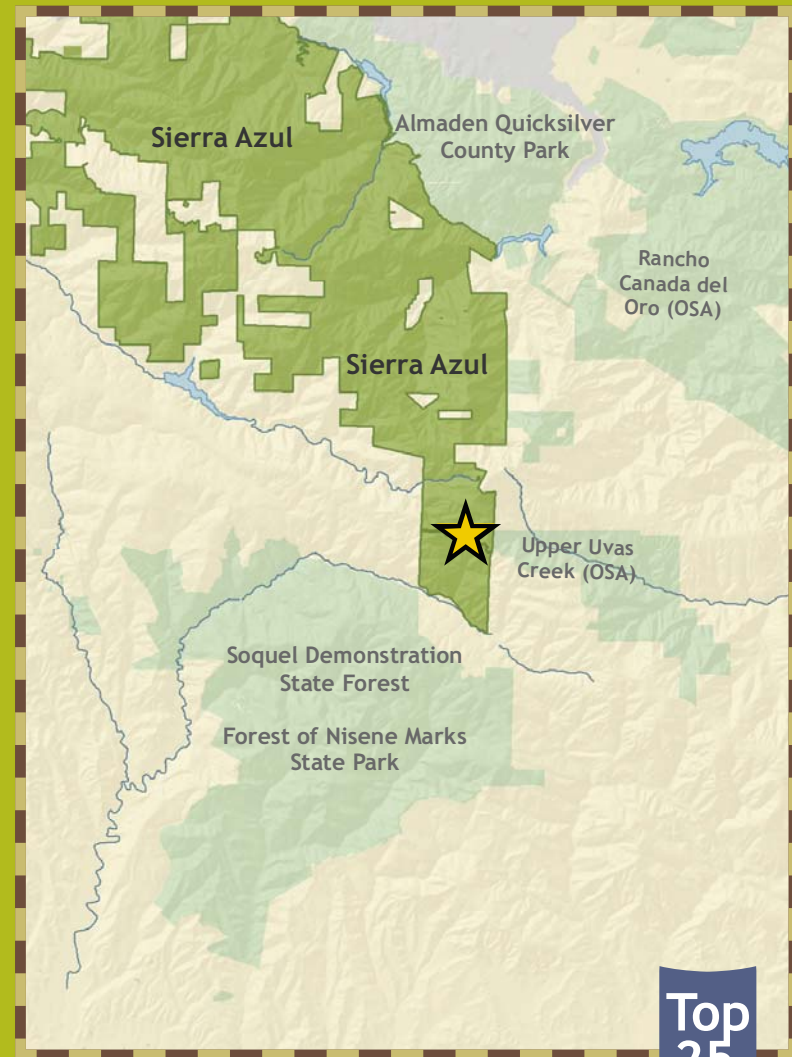
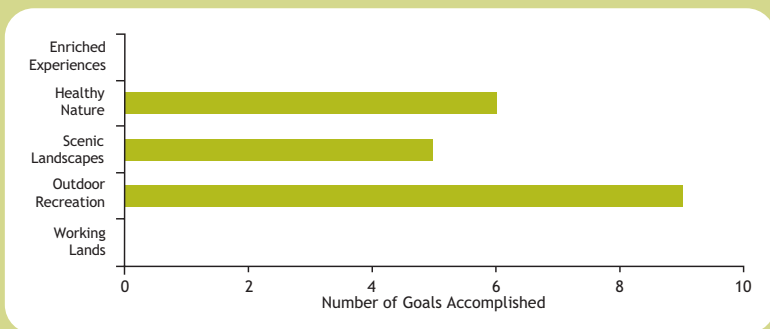
Loma Prieta Area Public Access, Regional Trails, and Habitat Projects



Provide public access and recreation, including small campground. Develop, improve, connect regional multi-use trails to Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, to protected land to east, and to Mt. Umunhum. Protect Steelhead habitat, rare plants and grasslands, restore Knobcone Pine stands.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



Open Loma Prieta Area to public access and camping at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve



# 26

## Pulgas Ridge:

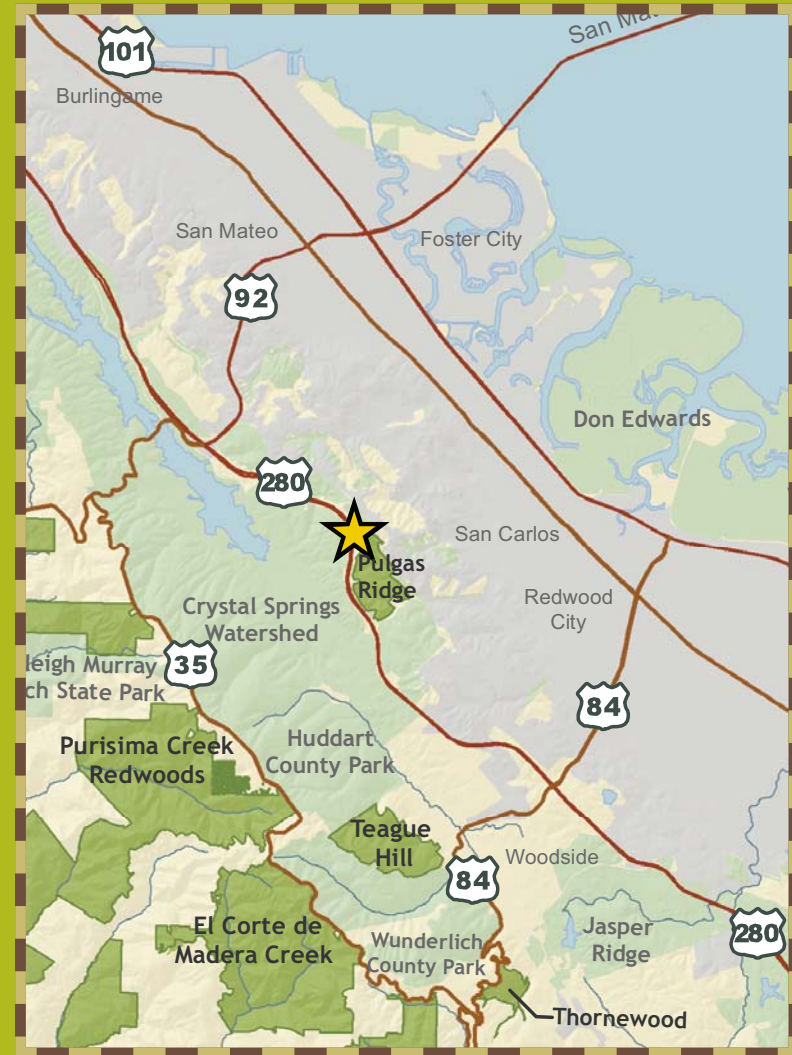
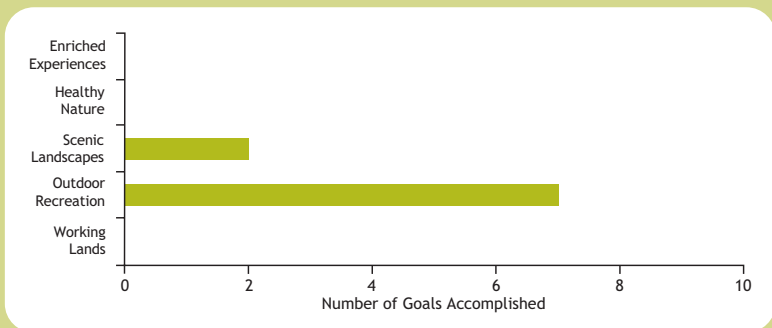
Regional and Neighborhood Trail Extensions



Collaborate to secure, plan for, and carry out East Ridge Boundary Trail extension to northwest. Develop neighborhood trail connection.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



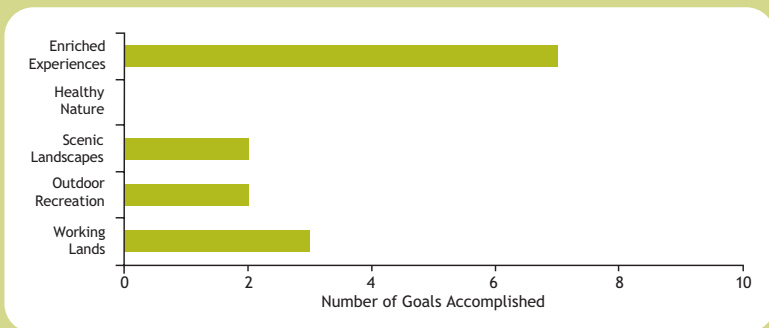
# Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Coastside Environmental Education Partnerships



Work with partners to support agricultural & environmental education, including education center & school programs. Support and interpret sustainable agriculture. Collaborate to provide educational trail loops linking to open space that foster family connections with coastside rural heritage.



## Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 28

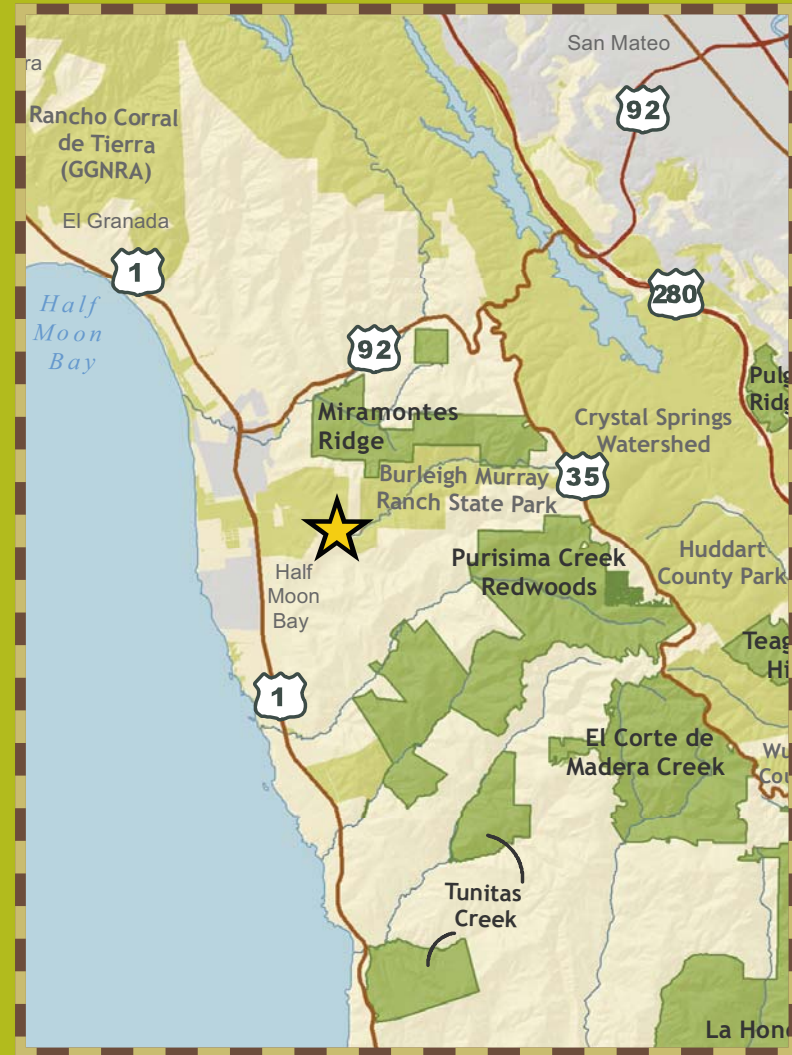
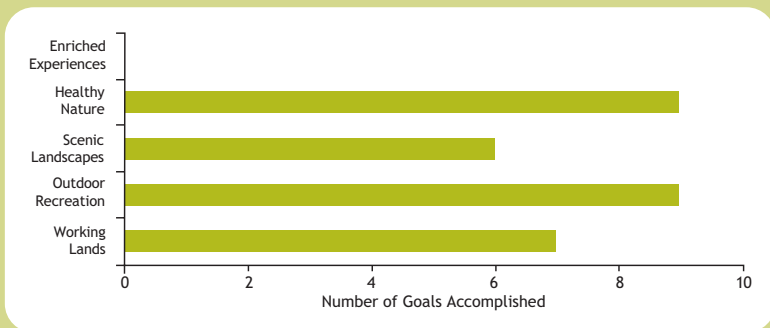
## Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Mills Creek / Arroyo Leon Watershed Protection, Stream Restoration, and Regional Trail Connections



Protect Mills Creek and Arroyo Leon watersheds, restore fisheries, preserve scenic open space, as land is available. Continue & enhance conservation grazing to sustain grasslands; improve fencing. Establish parking and connecting trails to nearby parks and preserves, including the Coastal Trail.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 29

## Regional:

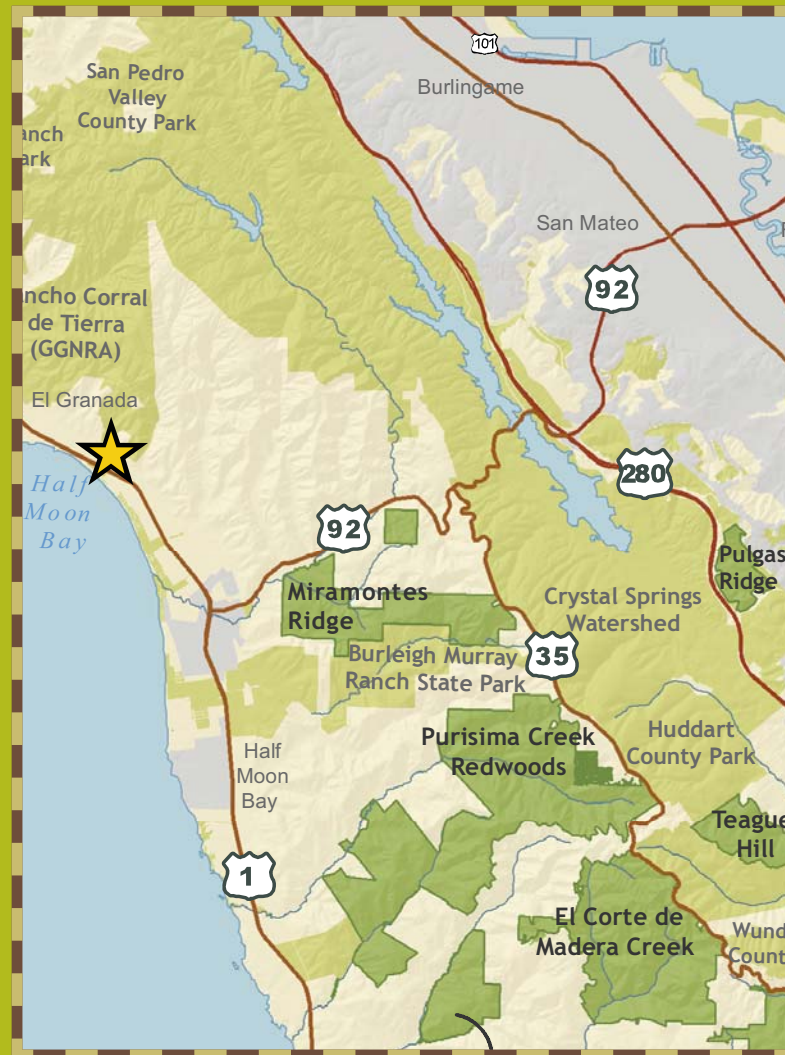
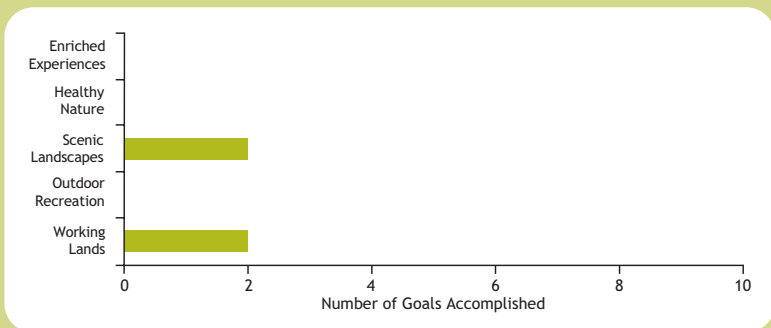
Advocate to Protect Coastal Vistas of North San Mateo County Coast



Protect rural landscape character and scenic vistas by participating in local planning processes. Monitor non-District projects for impact on coastal landscapes & traditional agriculture.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action

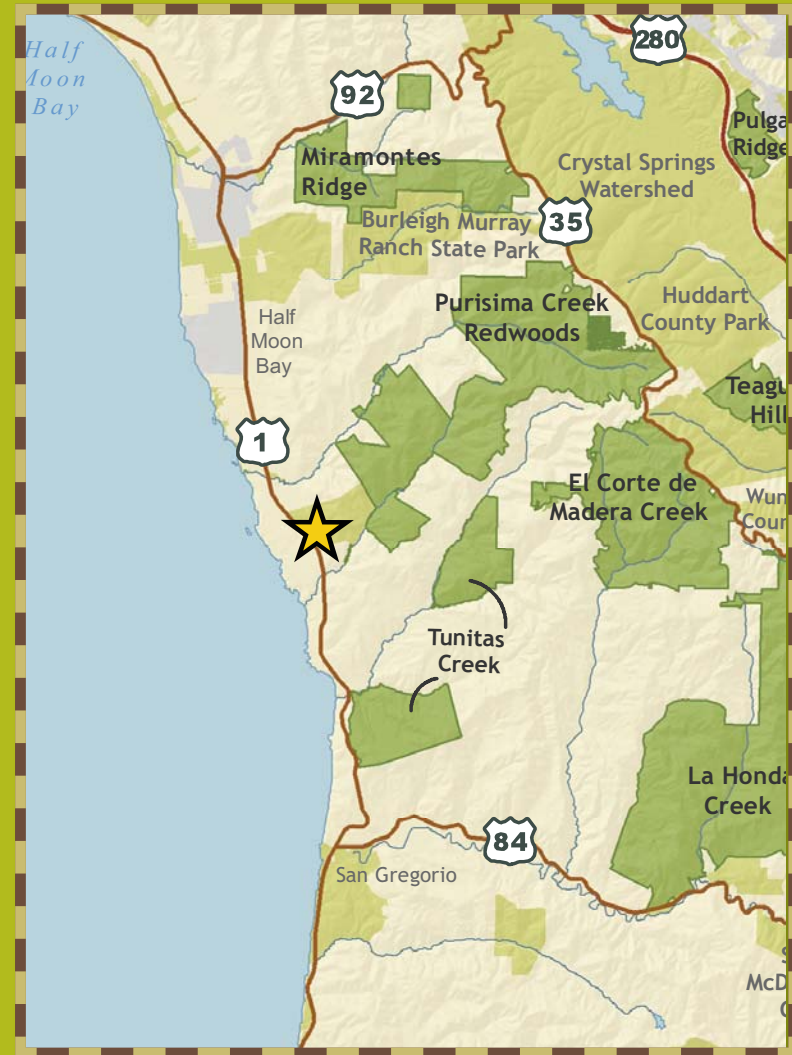


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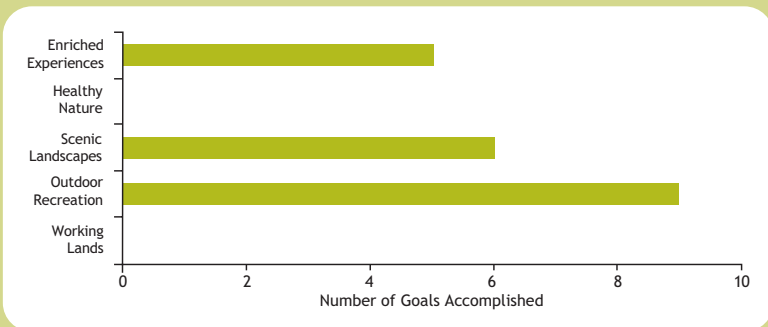
## Regional: Support California Coastal Trail



Encourage, facilitate, and partner to complete and manage the California Coastal Trail on the San Mateo Coast.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action

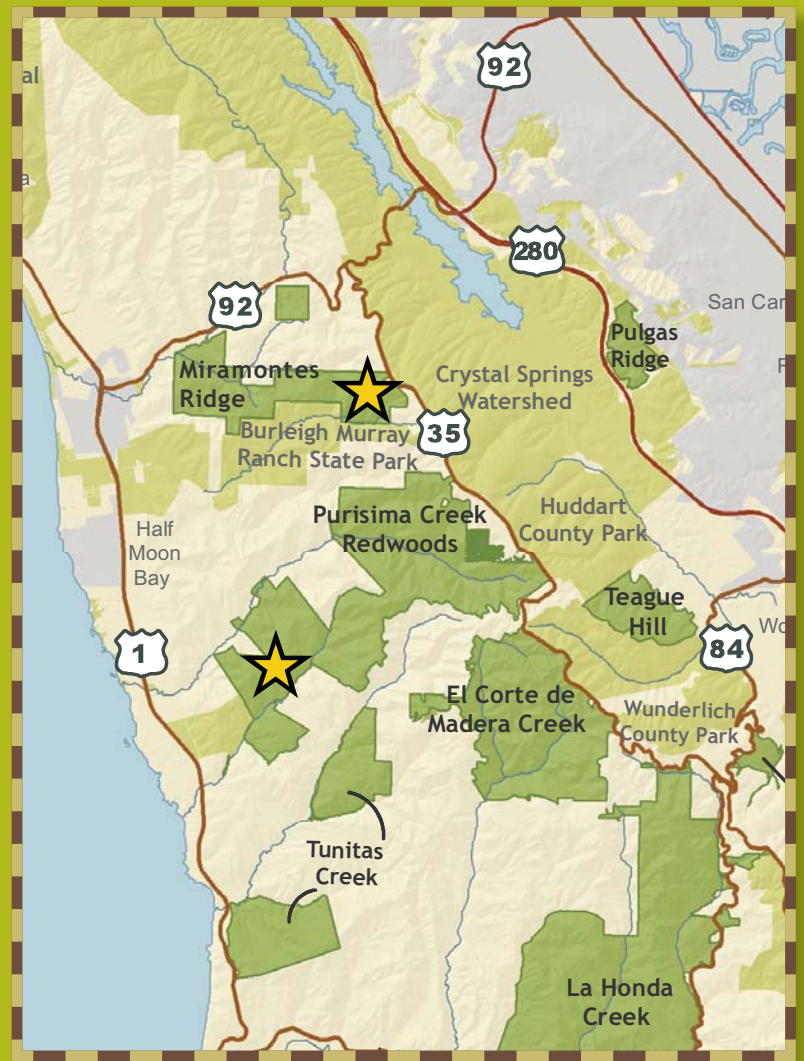


# 31

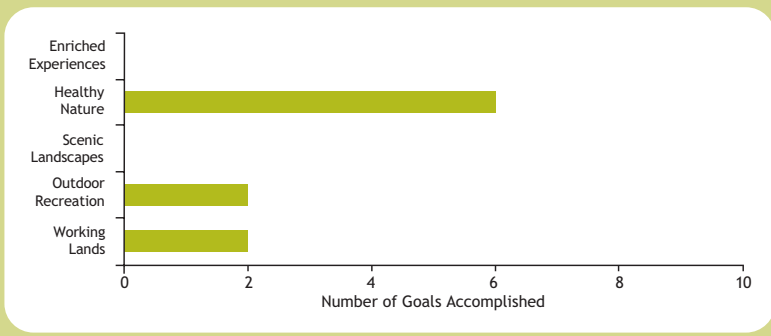
## Miramontes Ridge/Purisima Creek Redwoods: Fire Management and Risk Reductions



Develop and reintroduce fire management strategies to reduce fuel, regenerate native grasses, promote old-growth forest conditions. Create fuel breaks near residential areas/urban interface (HMB, Skyline Blvd.)



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 32

## Tunitas Creek:

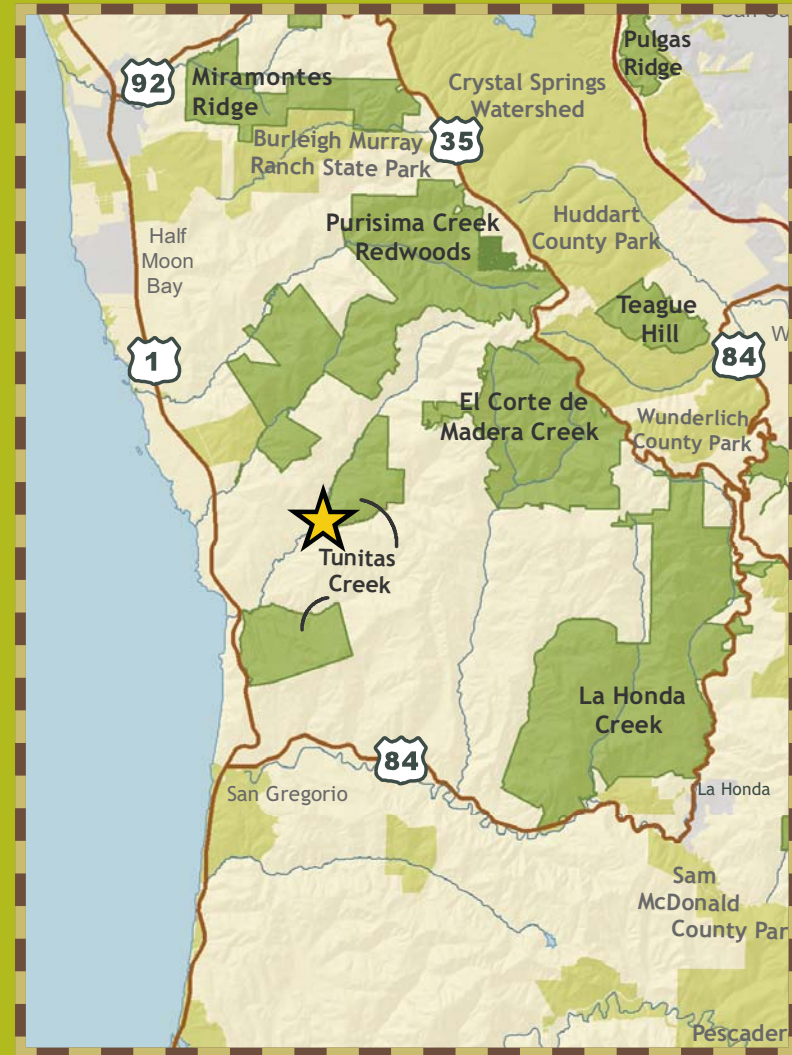
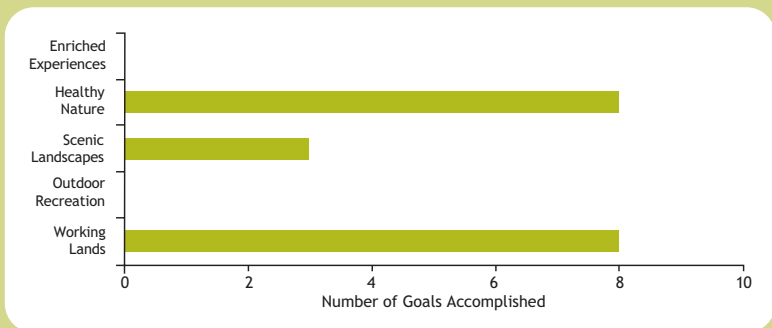
Additional Watershed Preservation & Conservation Grazing



Preserve additional open space as available. Remove fish barriers and restore streams. Continue & enhance conservation grazing to sustain large contiguous grasslands.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 33

## Purisima Creek Redwoods:

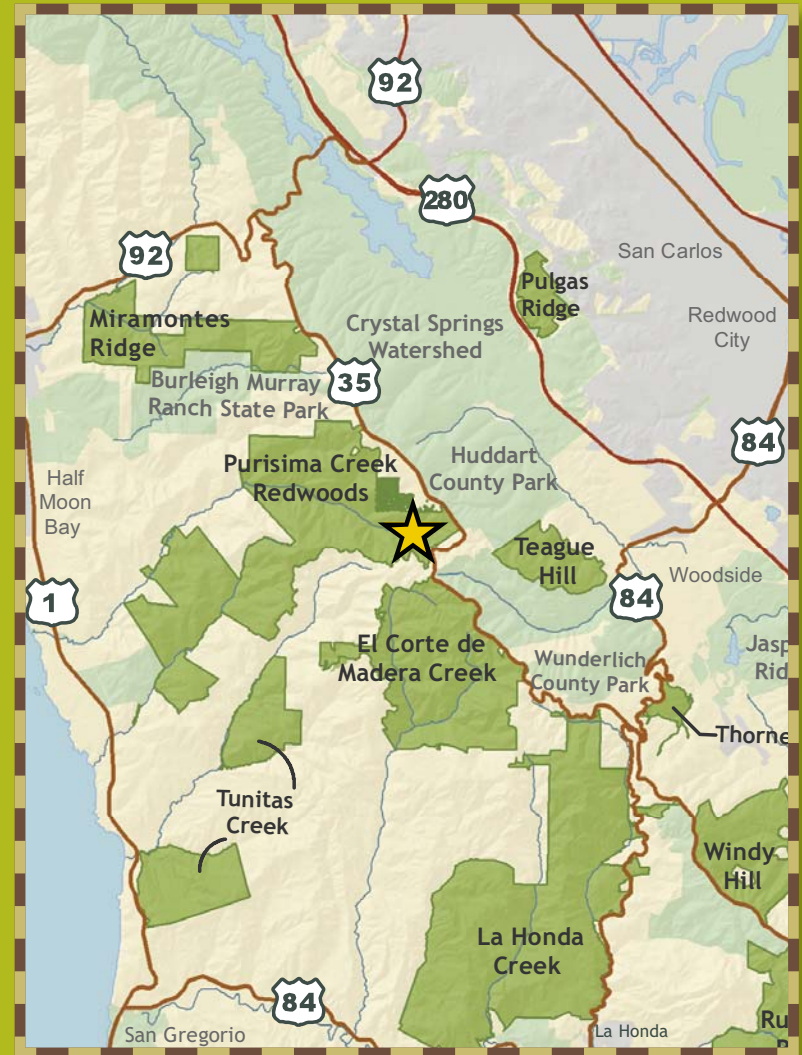
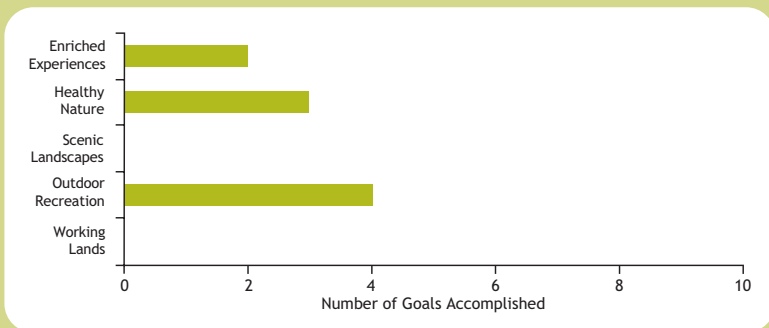
### Parking and Repair Projects



Improve parking, repair bridges. Improve ADA access on Redwood Trail. Deter marbled murrelet predators and develop regional public outreach. Preserve additional open space as available.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 34

## Teague Hill:

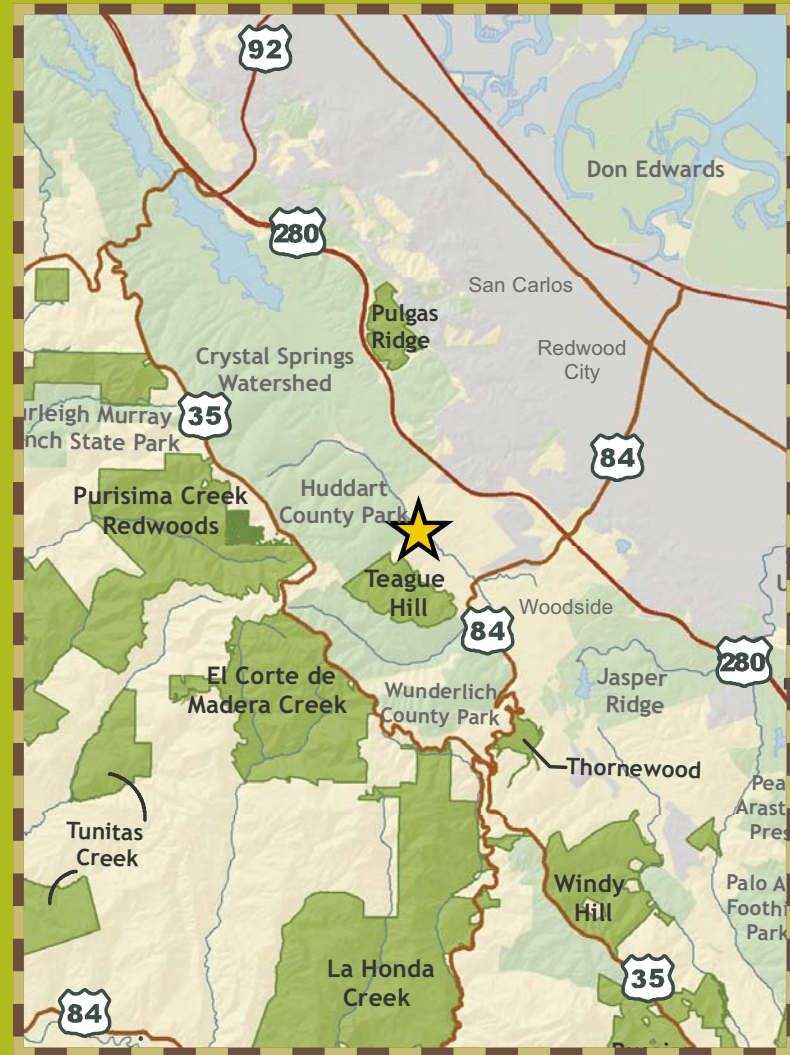
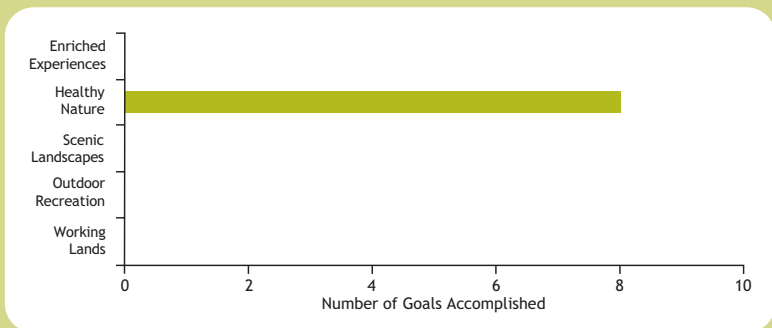
West Union Creek Watershed Restoration Partnership



Preserve additional open space as available. Collaborate to restore creek and watershed, improve water quality and habitat for various species.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 35

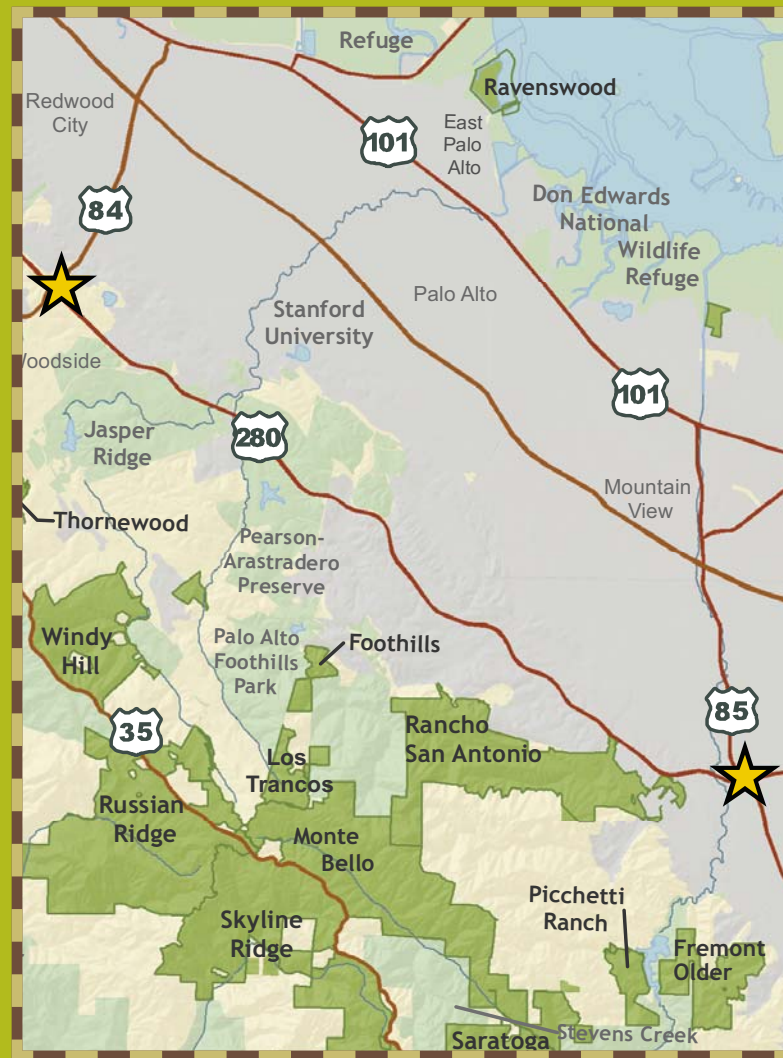
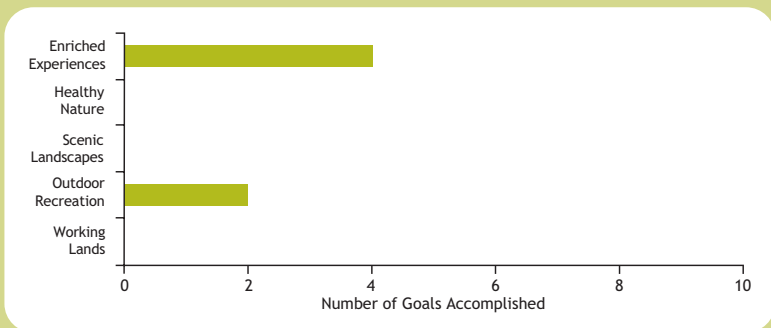
## Peninsula and South Bay Cities: Major Roadway Signage



Add prominent directional signs to District preserves on all major freeways/roadway.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 36

## Regional:

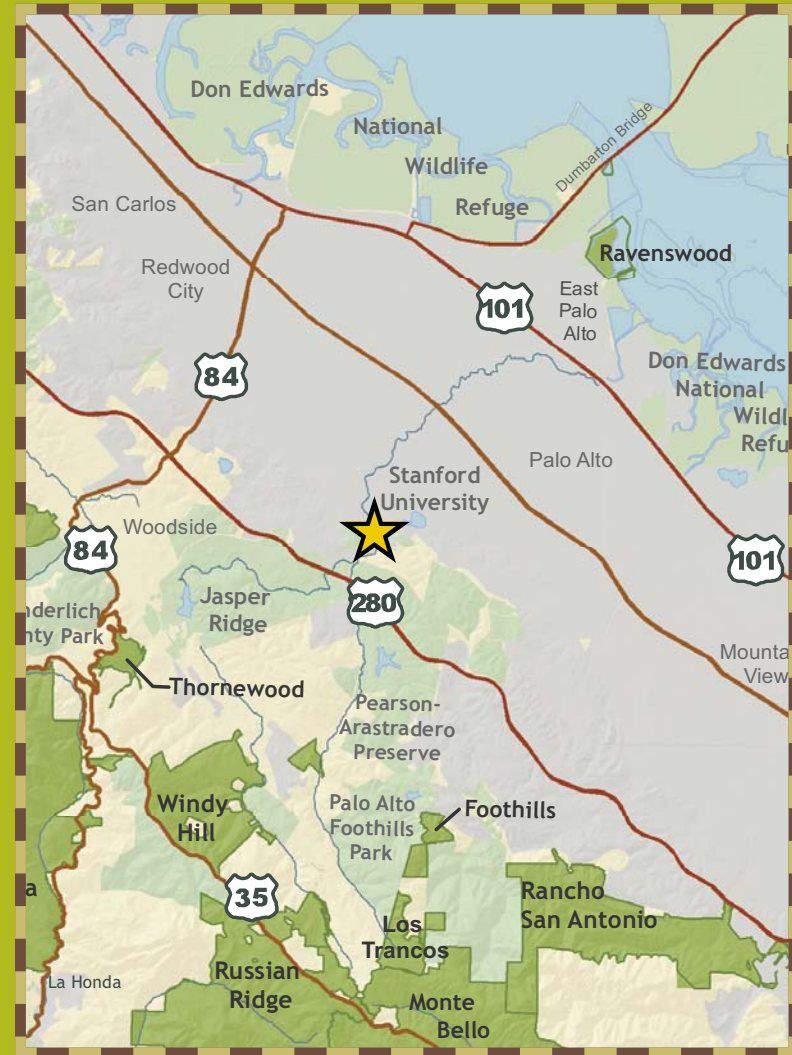
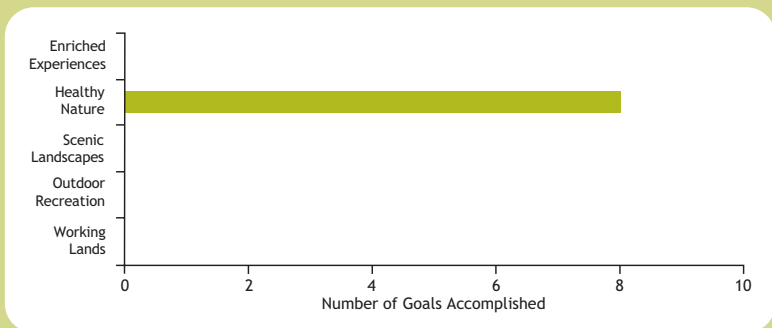
### Collaborate to Restore San Francisquito Creek Fish Habitat



Collaborate to restore fish habitat in San Francisquito Creek watershed.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 37

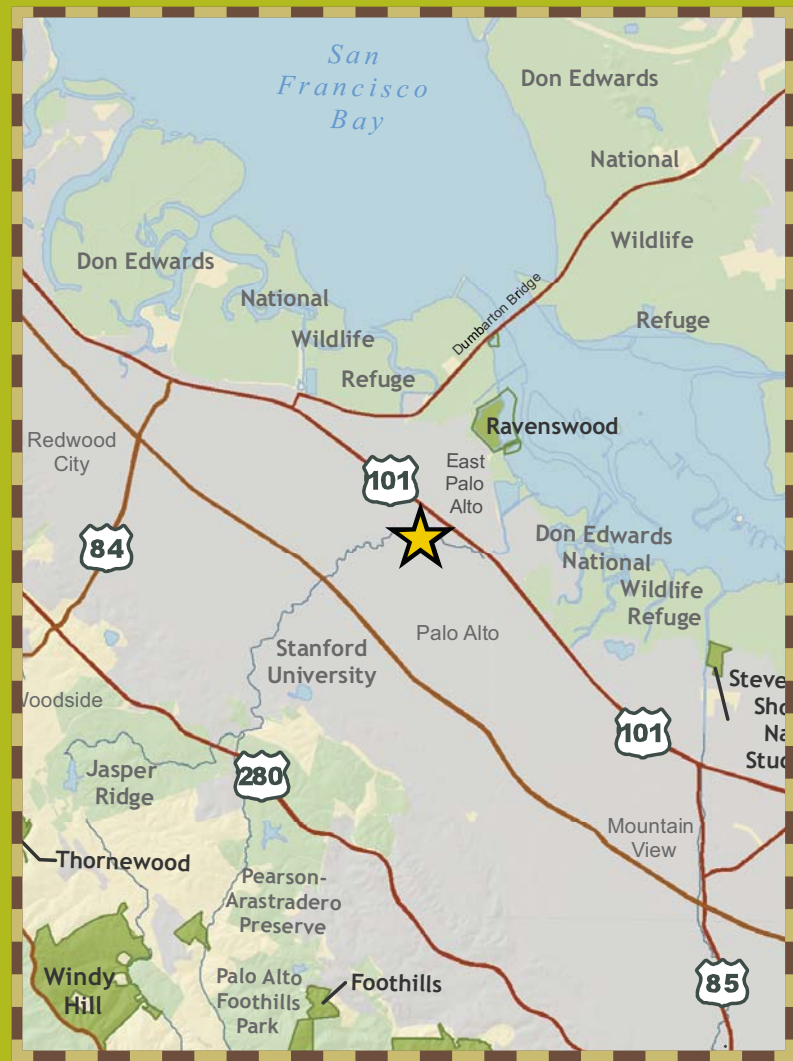
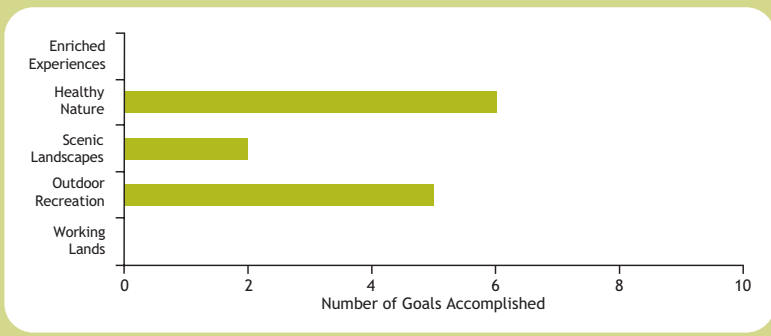
## Peninsula and South Bay Cities: San Francisquito Creek Restoration Partnership



Support local agency work to restore stream corridor. Ensure that trails are part of flood protection features.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



38

# Ravenswood:

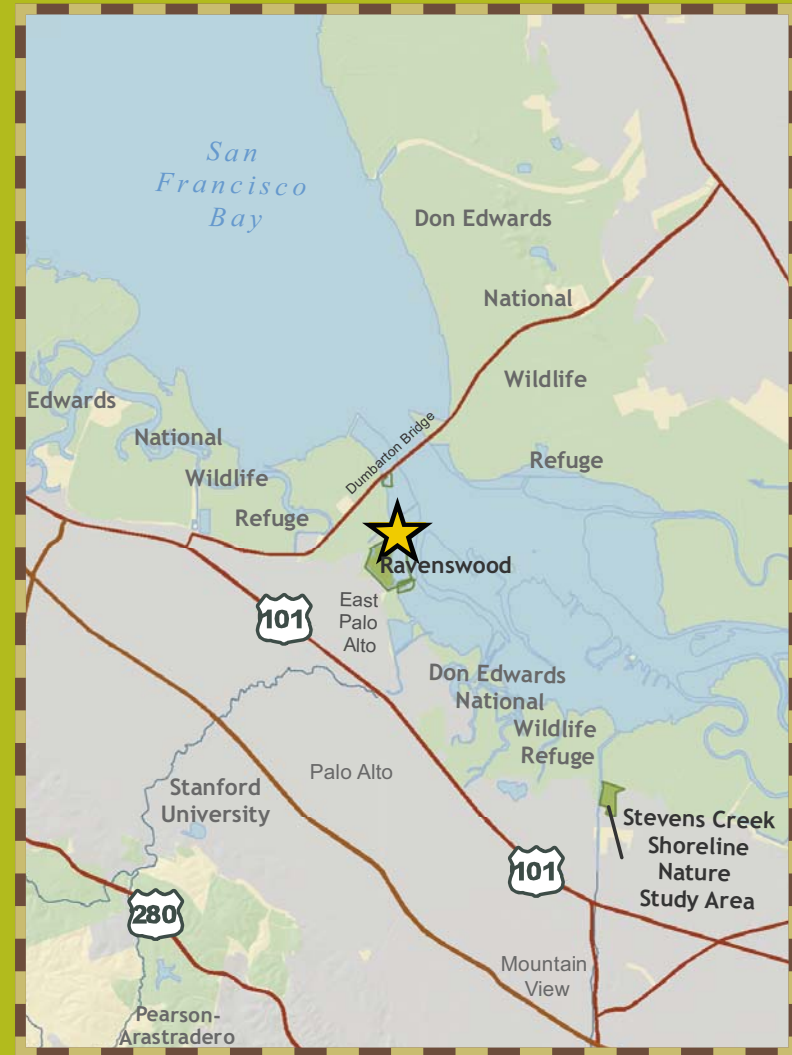
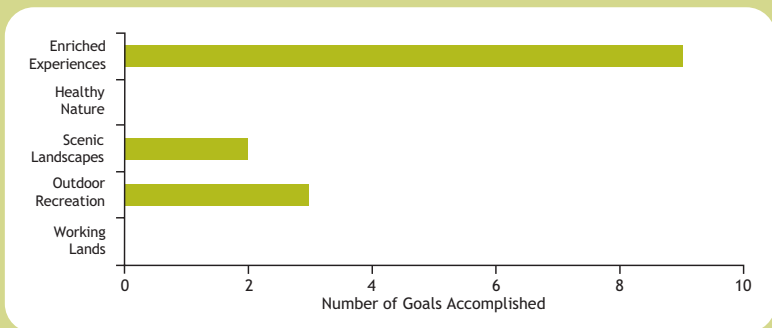
Cooley Landing Nature Center Partnership



Support East Palo Alto's Cooley Landing Plan, featuring nature education center focusing on community history and Bay-to-Mountain ecosystems.



## Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 39

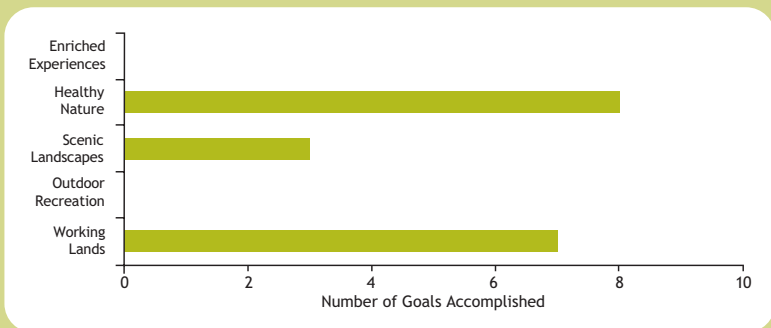
## La Honda Creek/El Corte de Madera Creek: San Gregorio Watershed & Agriculture Preservation Projects



Preserve additional open space as available. Protect forests, preserve streams and fish habitat. Preserve compatible farming. Continue & enhance conservation grazing. With partners, enhance water availability for agriculture and fish.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action

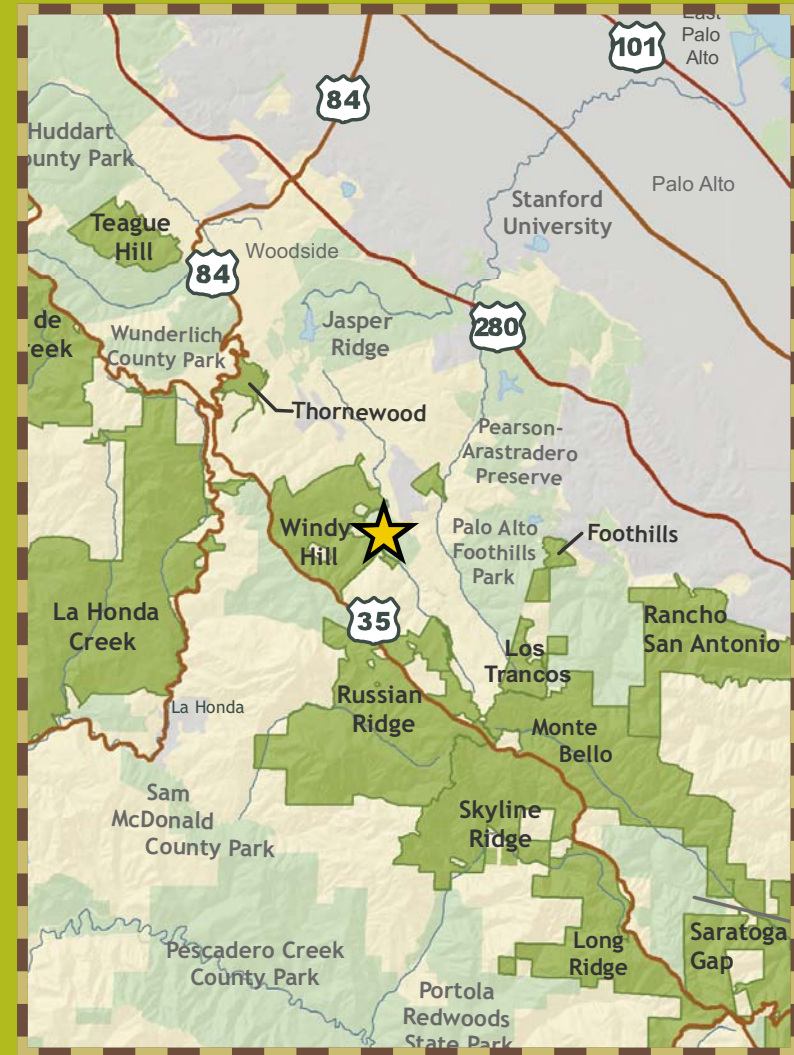


# 40

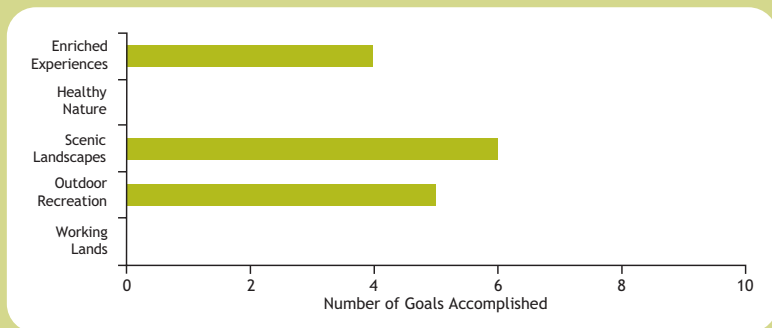
## Regional: San Andreas Fault Interpretive Trail Program



Improve, expand trails along Fault. Improve interpretive signs & services along trails. Highlight geology/history/significance of Fault areas.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



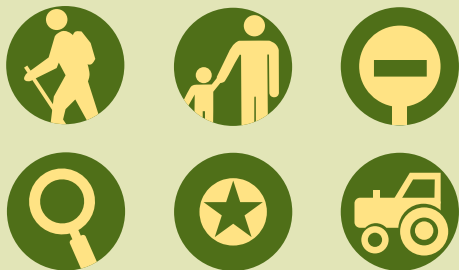
# 41

## Rancho San Antonio:

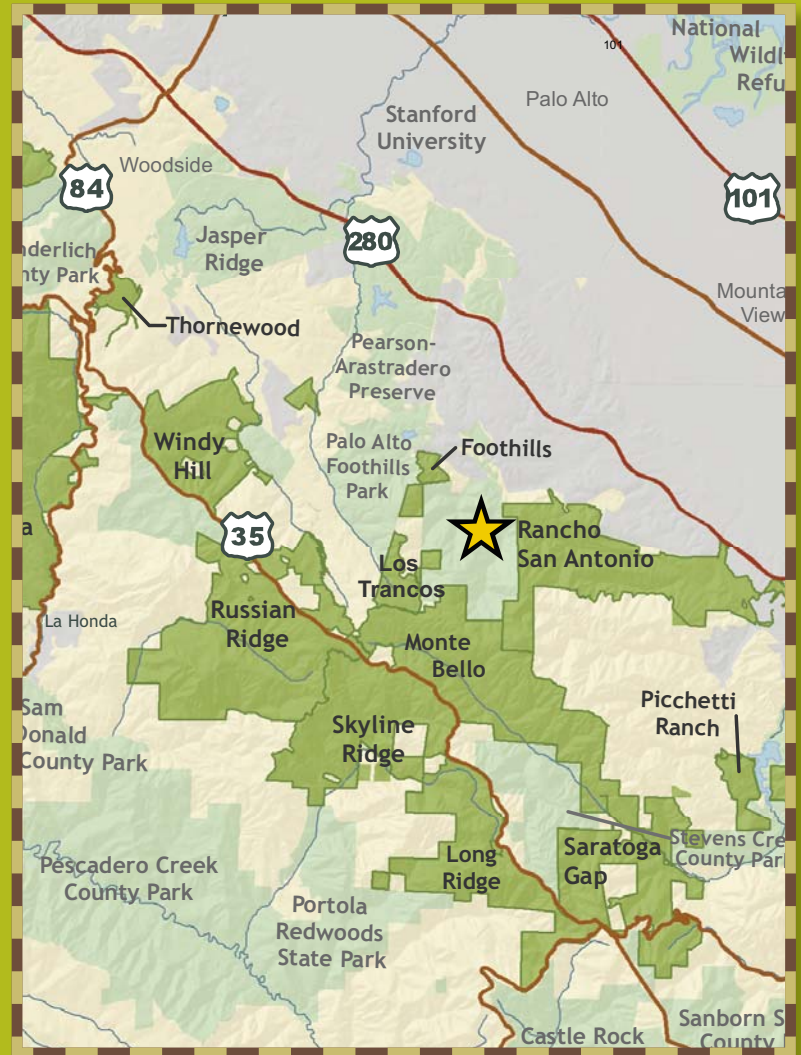
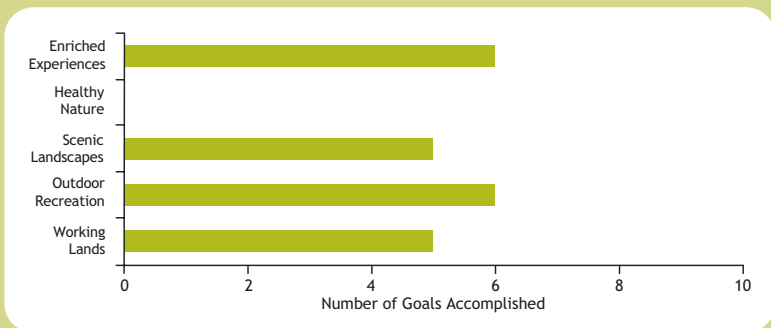
Hidden Villa Access and Preservation projects



Preserve agricultural fields and provide public access/educational programs for families. Develop staging area at Black Mountain Trailhead for new access point to Rancho San Antonio.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 42

## Regional:

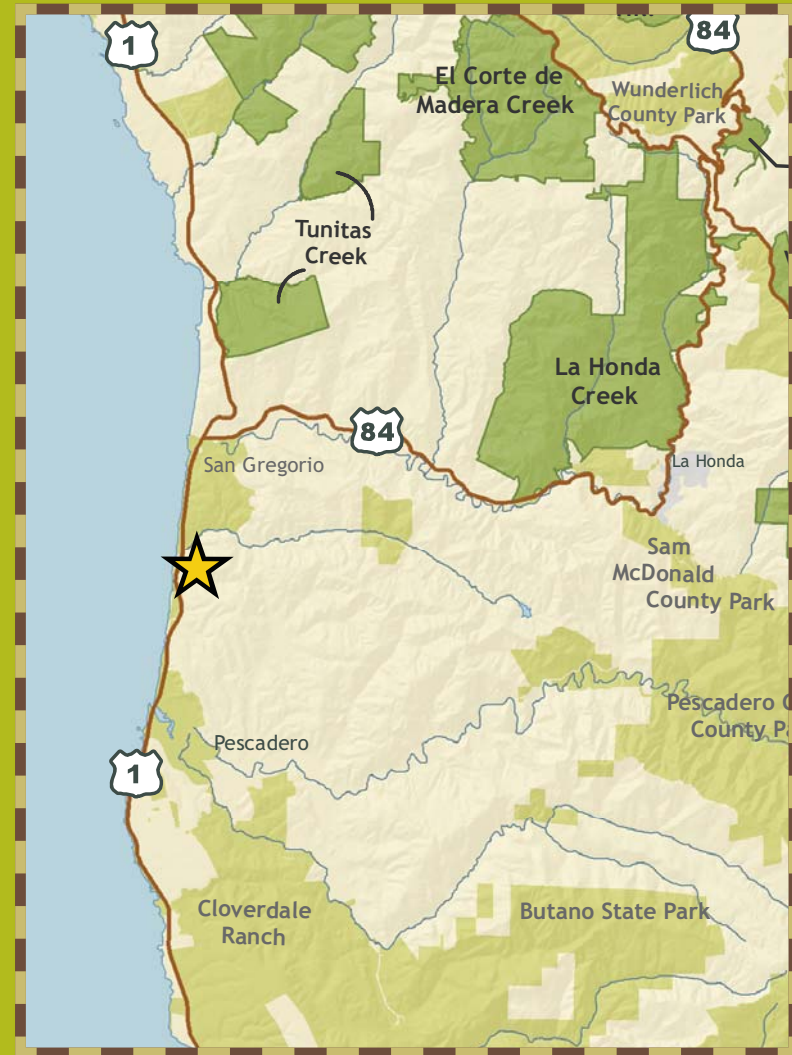
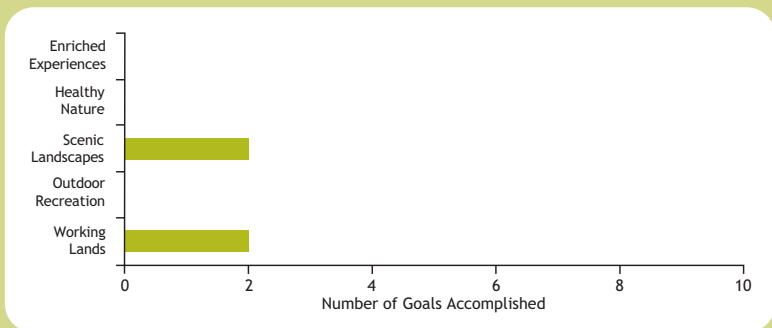
Advocate to Protect Coastal Vistas of South San Mateo County Coast



Protect rural landscape character and scenic vistas by participating in local planning processes. Monitor non-District projects for impact on coastal landscapes & traditional agriculture.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 43

## Lower Pomponio Creek:

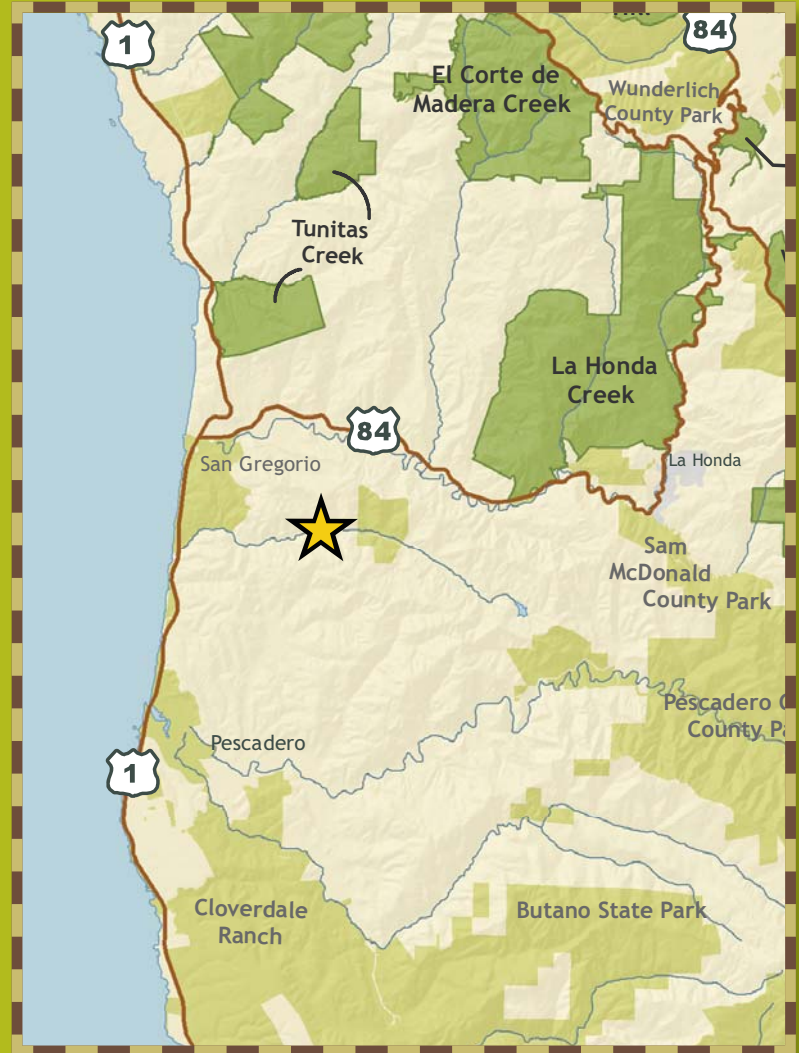
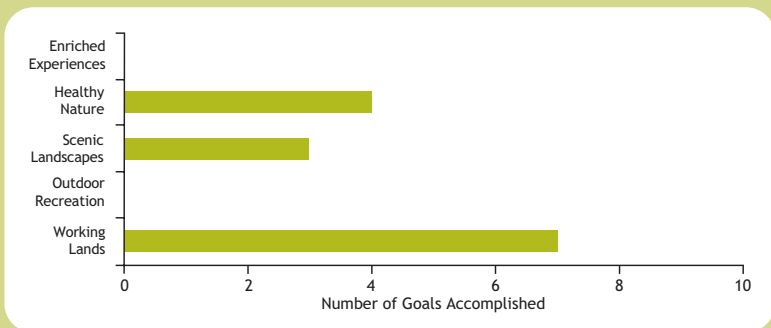
Watershed Preservation & Conservation Grazing



Continue & enhance conservation grazing to sustain large contiguous grasslands in the Pomponio & Bradley Creek watersheds.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 44

## Lower Pescadero Creek:

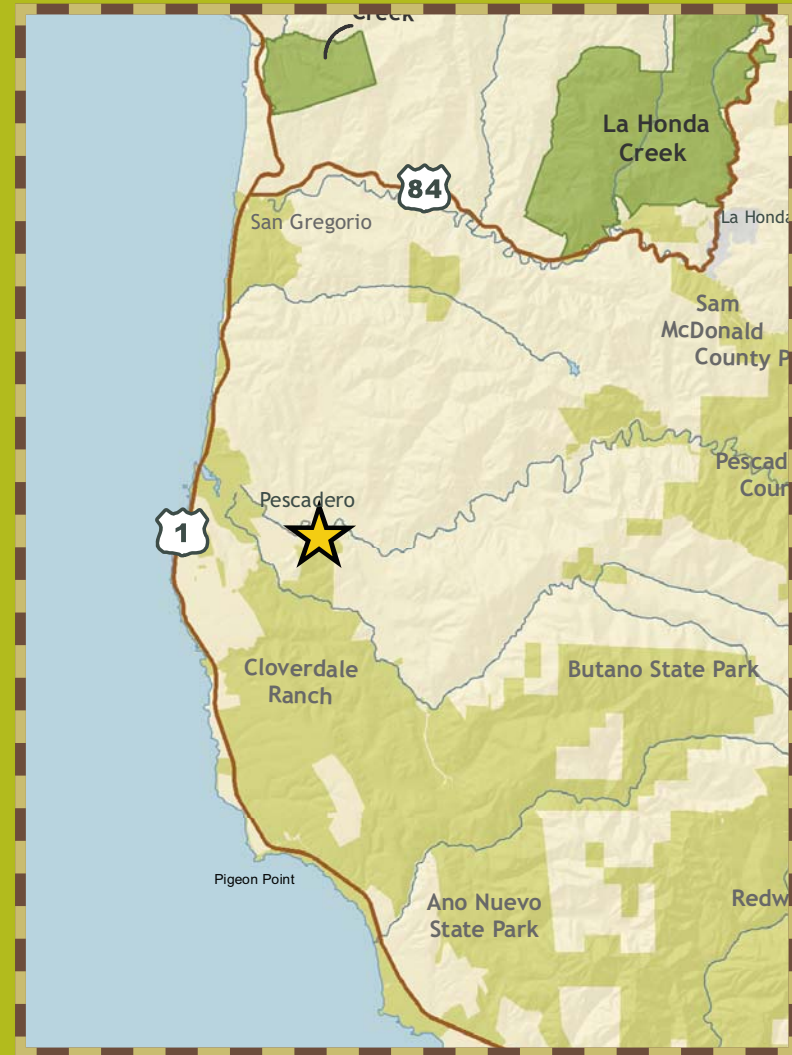
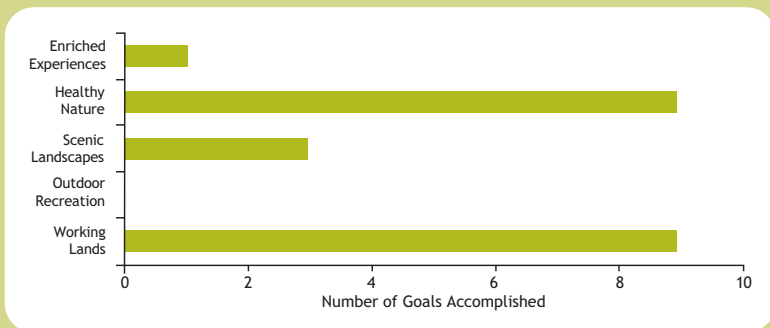
Watershed Preservation & Conservation Grazing



Preserve additional open space as available in lower Pescadero Creek watershed. Continue & enhance conservation grazing. Restore riparian areas & fish habitats. With partners, enhance water availability for agriculture and fish. Support partner efforts to restore Pescadero Marsh. Collaborate to encourage sustainable agriculture.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action





# 45

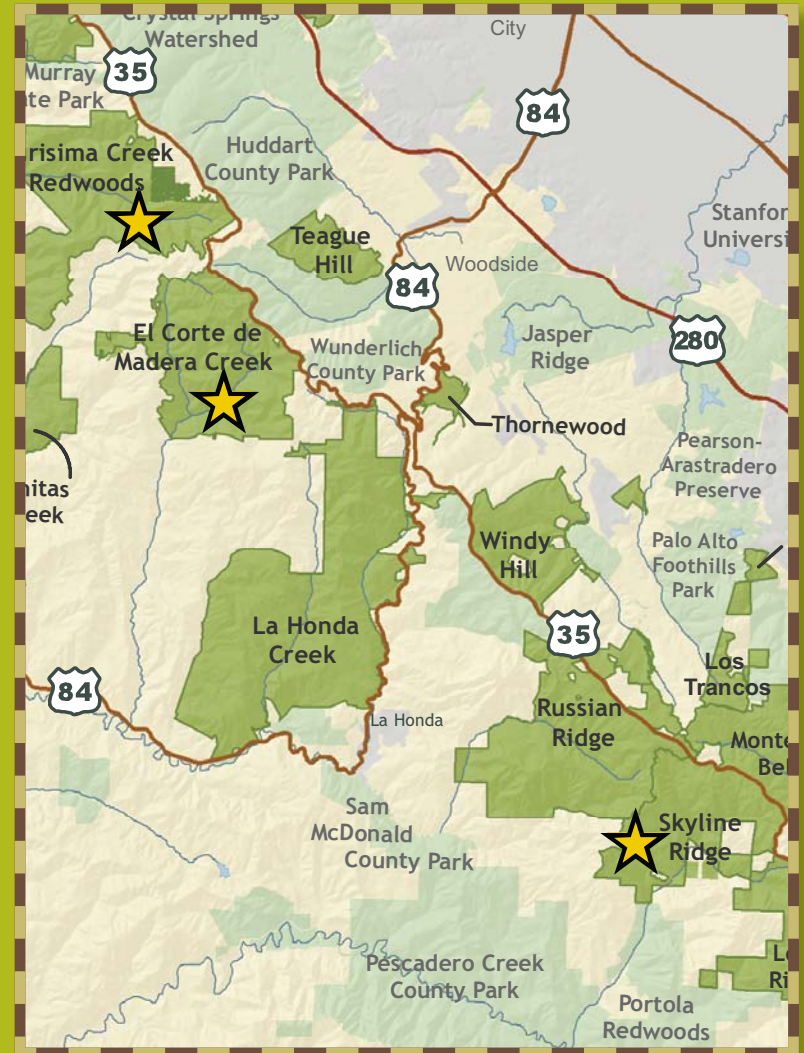
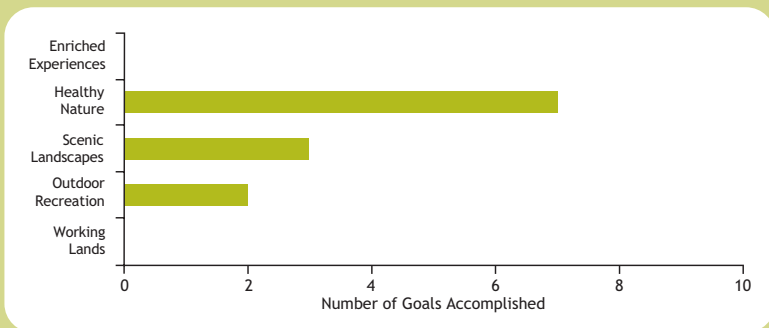
## Skyline Subregion: Fire Management and Forest Restoration Projects



Develop plan and carry out fuel reduction and fire management practices at Skyline subregion Preserves, especially near rural communities; restore grasslands, regenerate shrublands. Conduct forest restoration activities to improve habitat value of redwood/fir forests and increase old-growth habitat conditions, especially older forest stands.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 46

## Skyline Ridge:

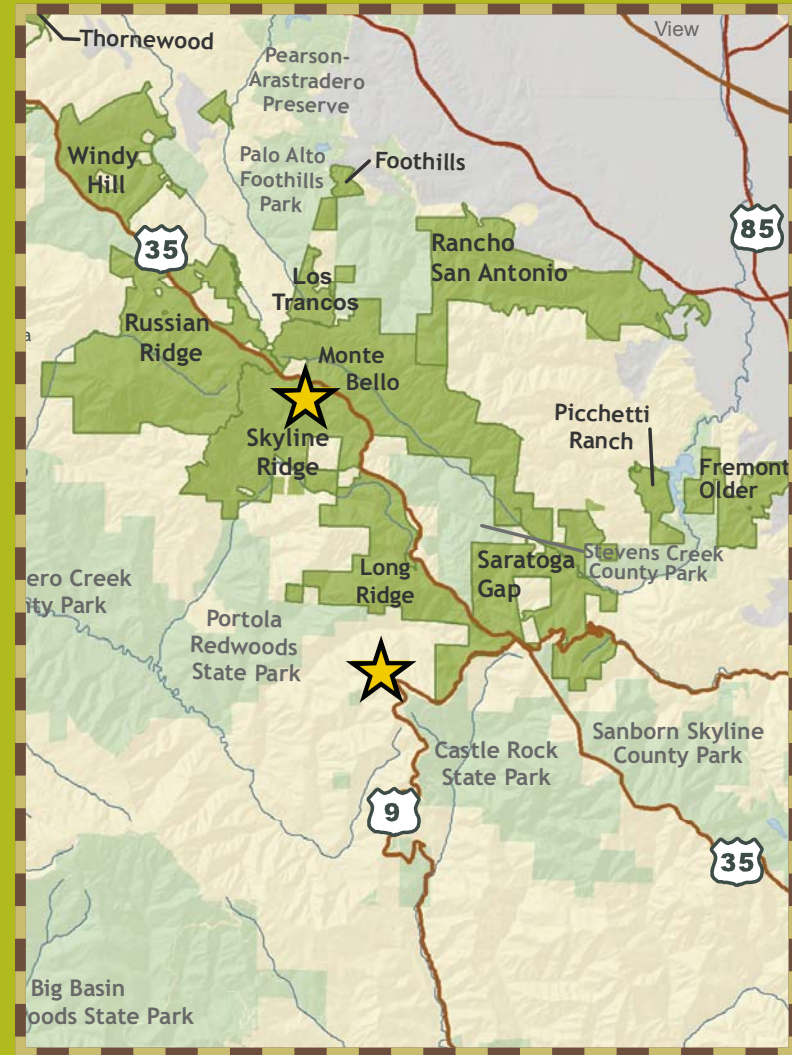
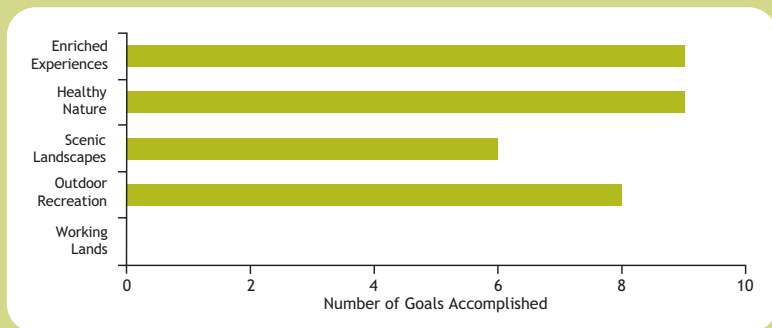
Education Facilities, Trails, and Wildlife Conservation Projects



Create Horseshoe Pond nature education facility, improve existing nature center, and connect facilities for comprehensive interpretive complex. Provide ADA trail, hiking, picnicking. Improve habitat at Alpine Pond. Open Page Mill Trail through to Portola Redwoods State Park. Repair roads and trails. Protect watershed for steelhead, preserve additional open space as available.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 47

## Monte Bello:

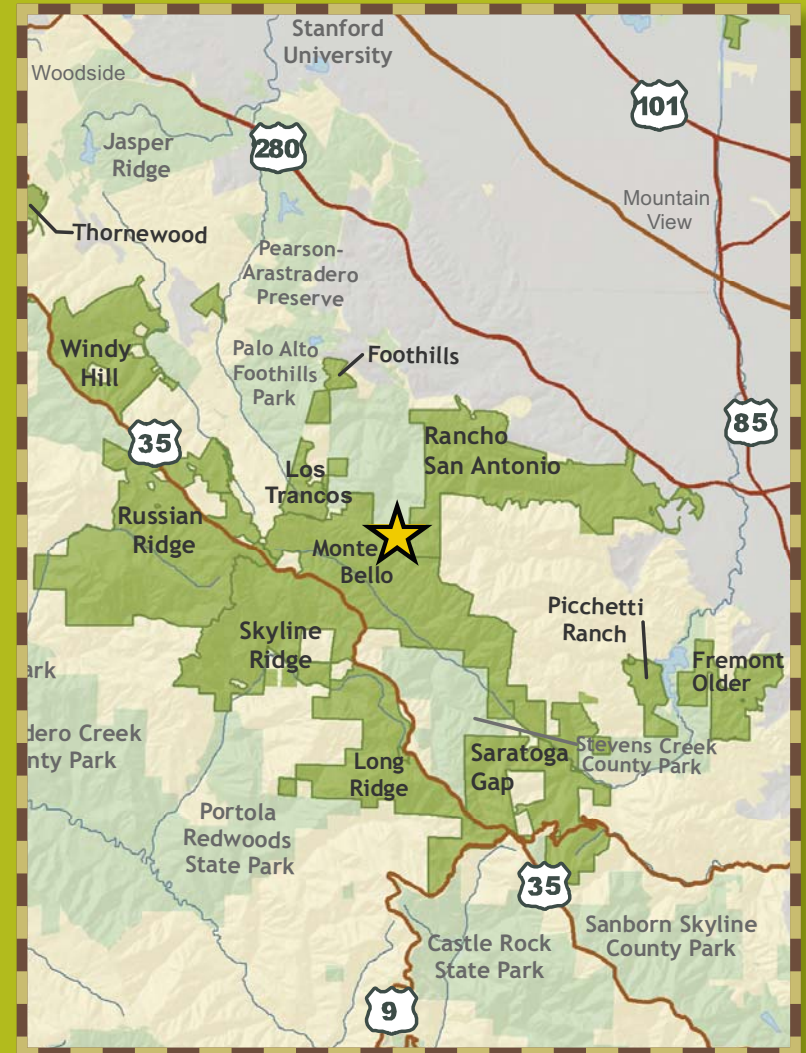
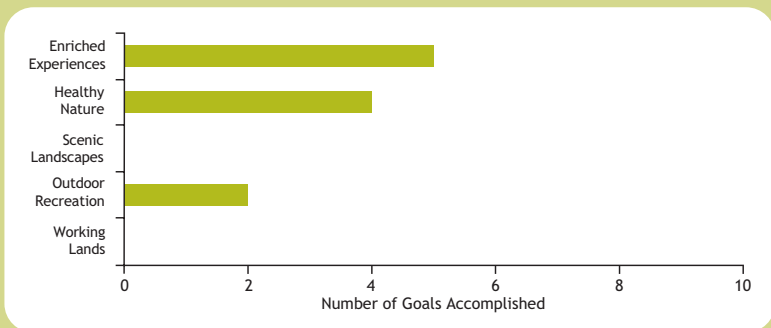
Campfire Talks and Habitat Projects



Develop small amphitheater, provide educational talks at Black Mountain Campground. (Pilot program that may be expanded to other preserves.) Implement pond management and enhancement projects to benefit rare aquatic species: red-legged frog, garter snake, pond turtle, etc.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



48

# Gazos Creek Watershed:

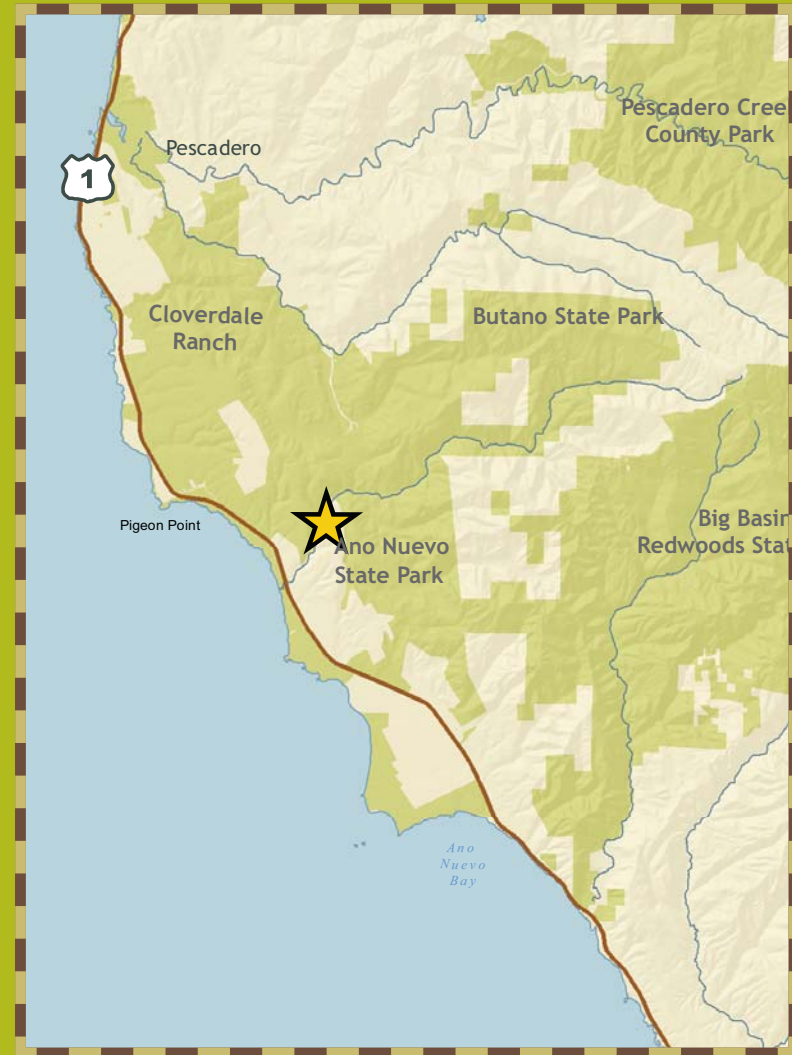
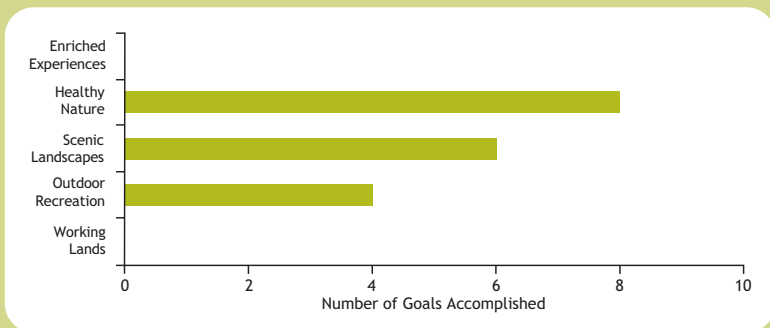
Redwood preservation, long-distance trails, fish habitat improvements



Preserve Gazos Creek watershed. Secure long-distance trail routes between State Parks. Preserve and restore redwood forests. Improve salmon & trout habitat.



## Goals Accomplished by This Action

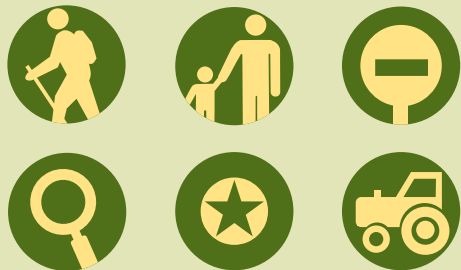


# Saratoga Gap:

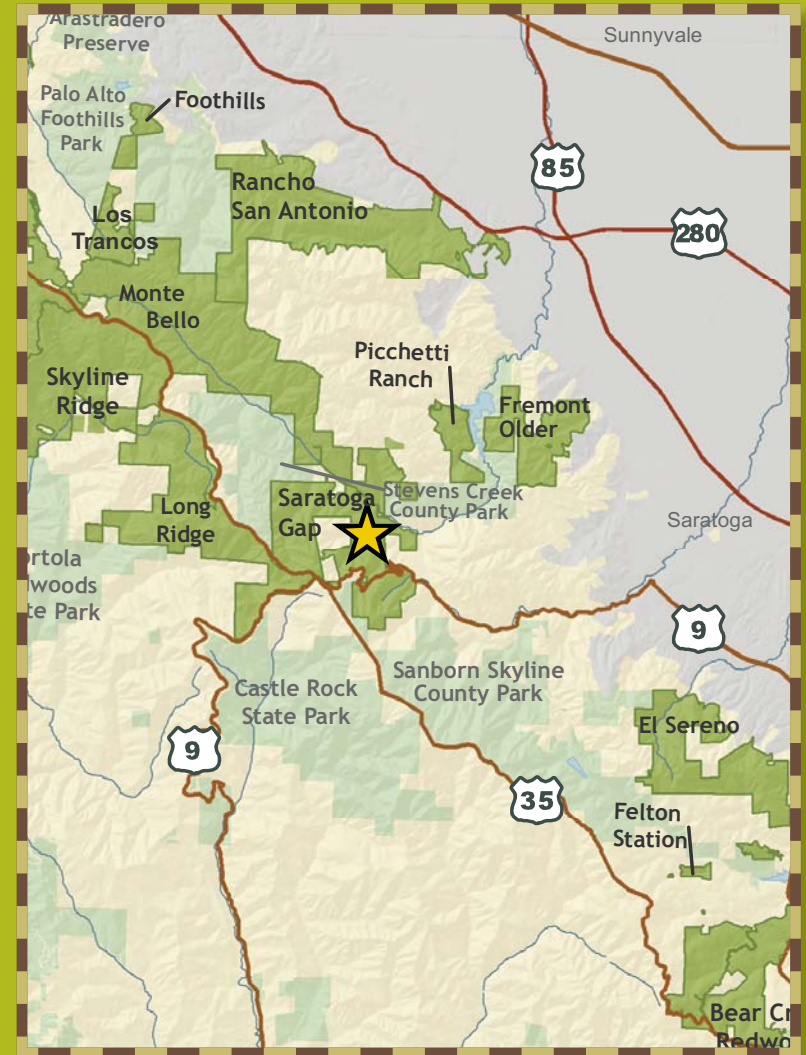
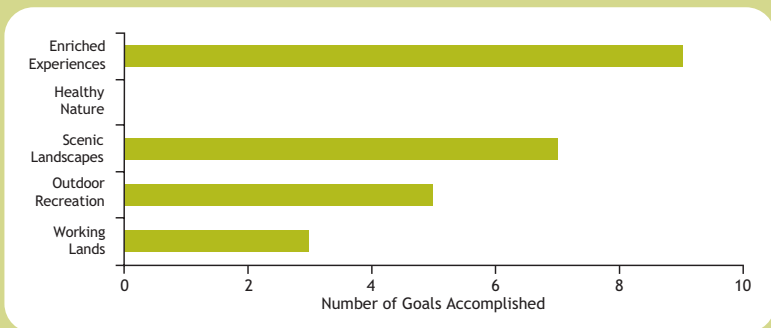
Stevens Canyon Ranch Family Food Education Projects



Open area and develop local food educational programs for families. Provide interpretive/historical services. Restore historic buildings. Develop limited trail system featuring historical & cultural resource information.



## Goals Accomplished by This Action



50

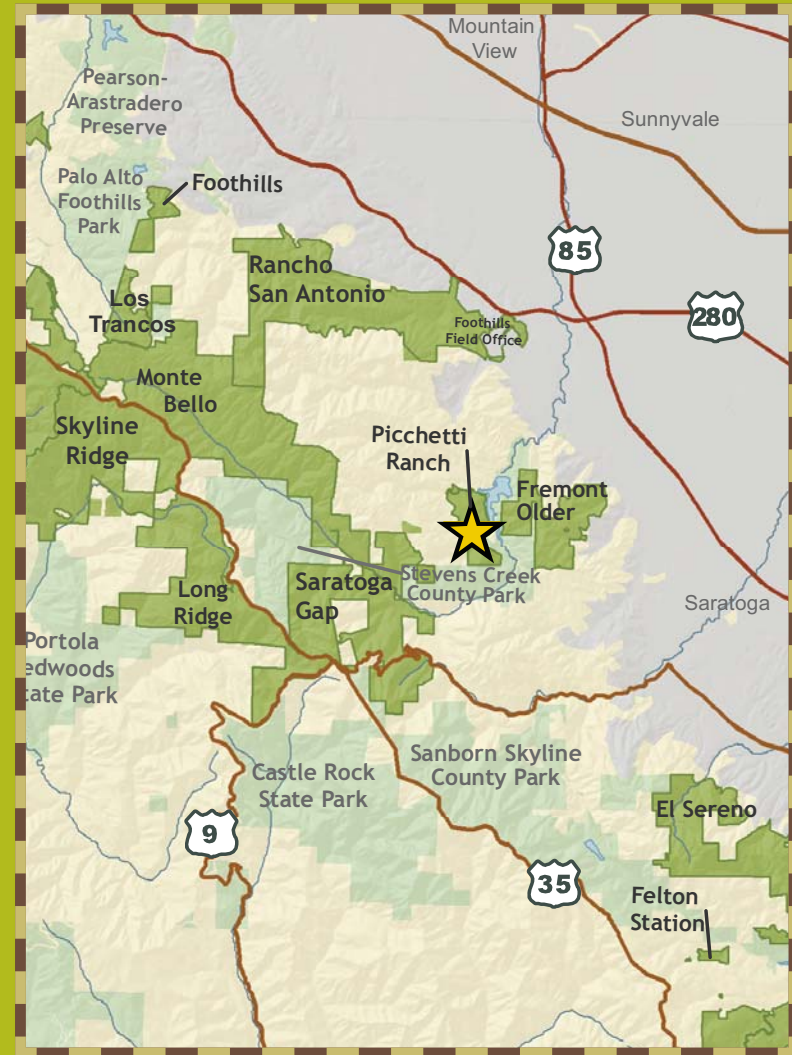
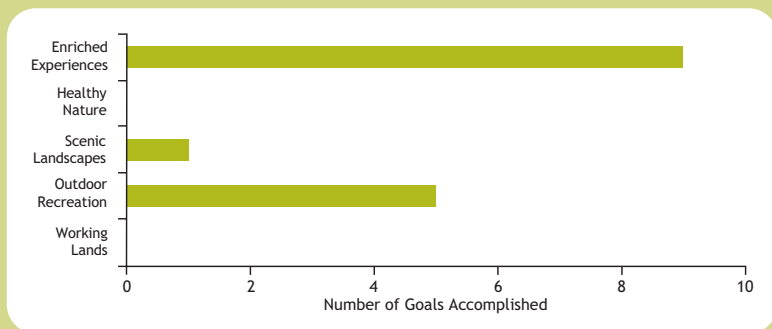
# Picchetti Ranch: Family Nature Play Program



Develop program to encourage family connections to nature with children's nature-play opportunities.



## Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 51

## Fremont Older:

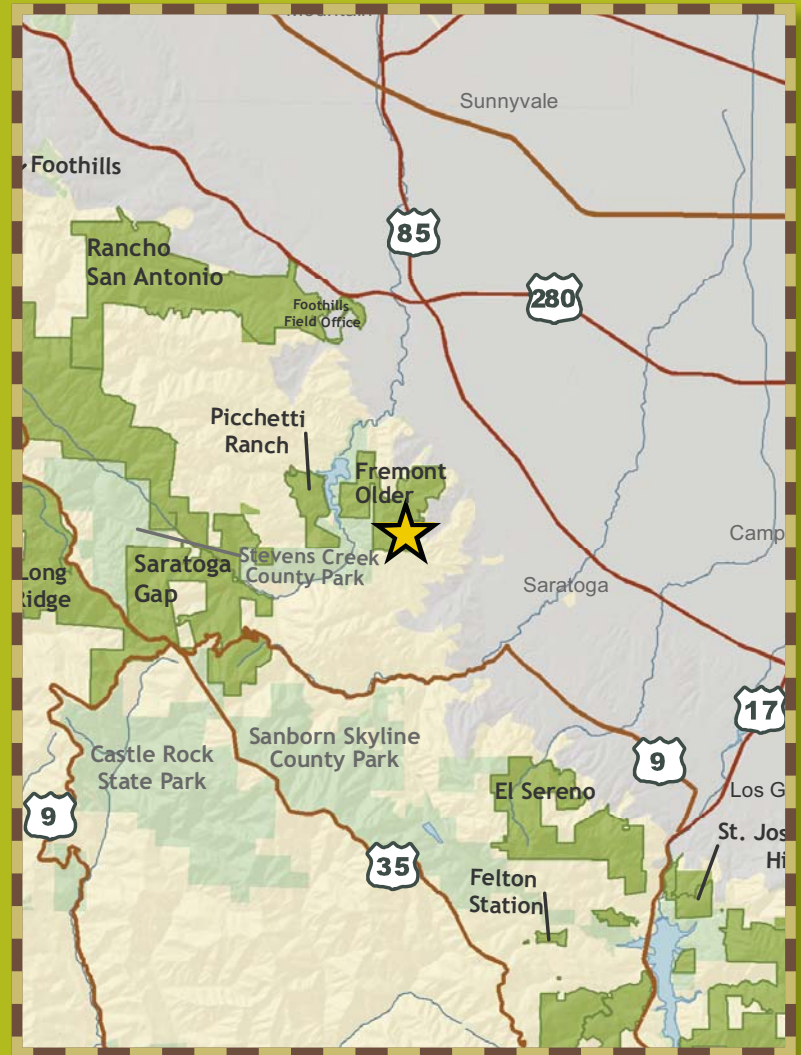
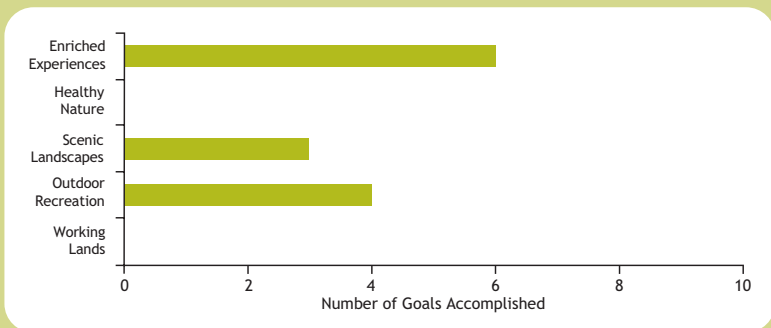
Historic Woodhills Restoration and Overall Parking Improvements



Restore historic Woodhills home. Develop interpretive materials and increase public tours. Improve parking layout and signage.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 52

## Peninsula and South Bay Cities:

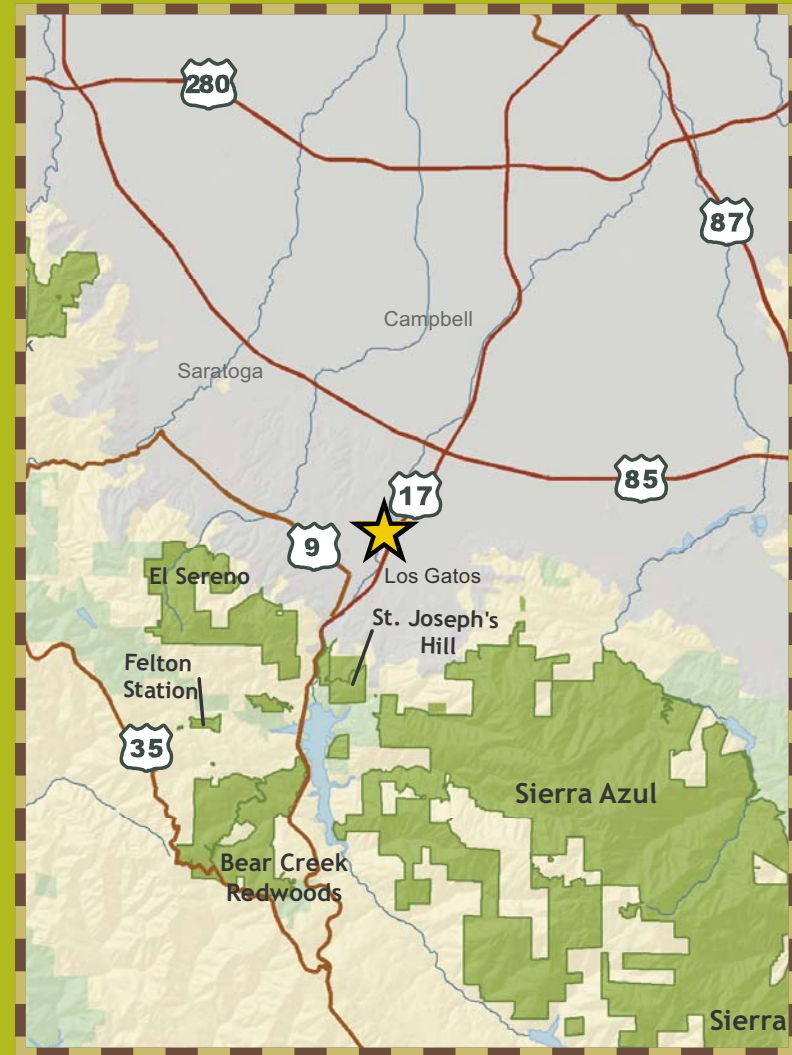
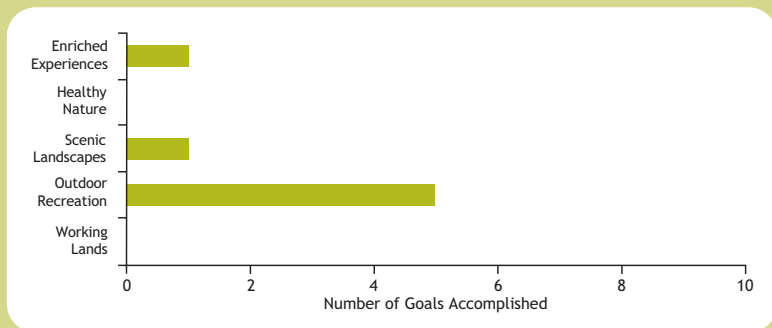
### Los Gatos Creek Trail Connections



Support work by cities to connect trail communities and neighborhoods through interpretive signage, etc. along trail.



#### Goals Accomplished by This Action





53

# Sierra Azul:

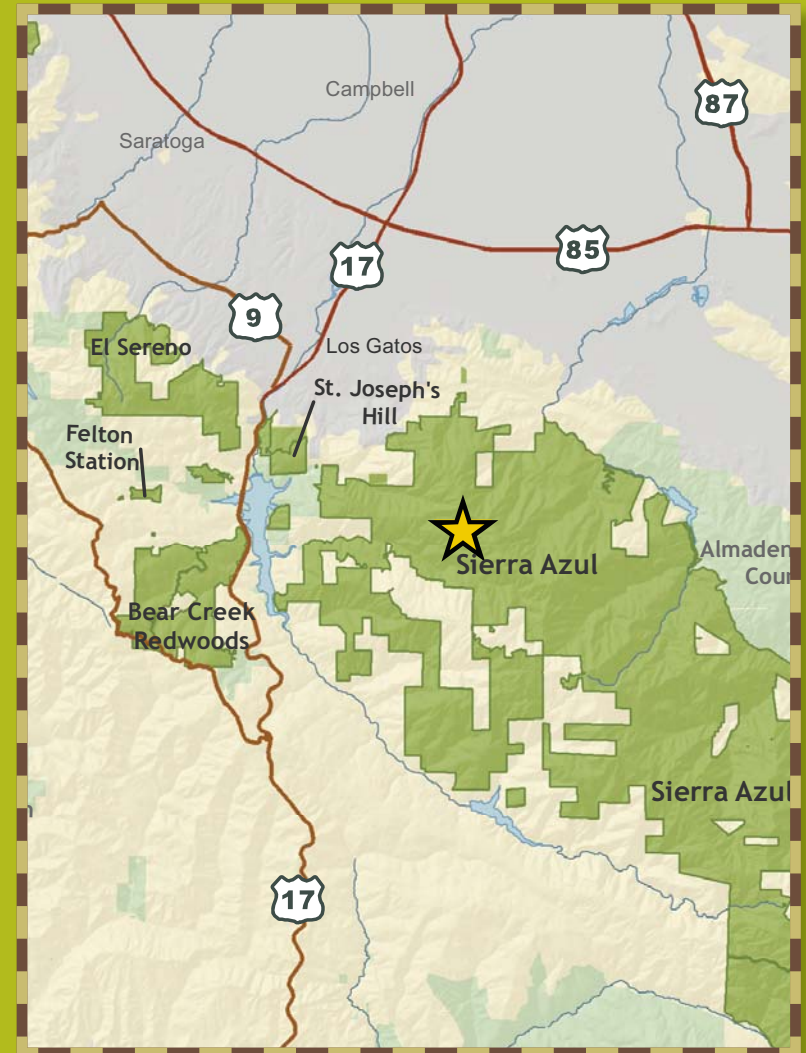
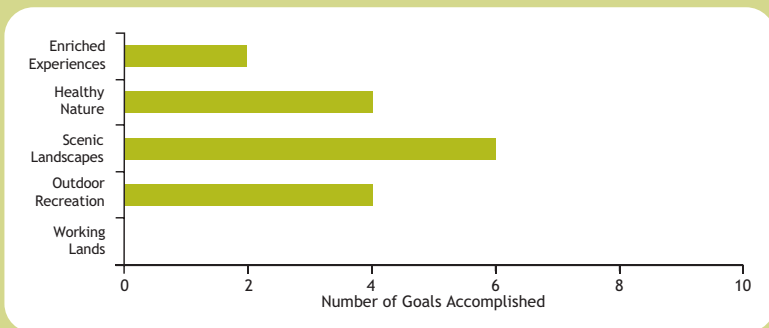
Expand access in the Kennedy-Limekiln Area



Enhance & convert trails, expand parking at Kennedy Road trailhead, address neighborhood parking concerns. Develop permit campground and restrooms. Protect various habitats & collaborate to preserve historic structures. Restore damaged trails.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# 54

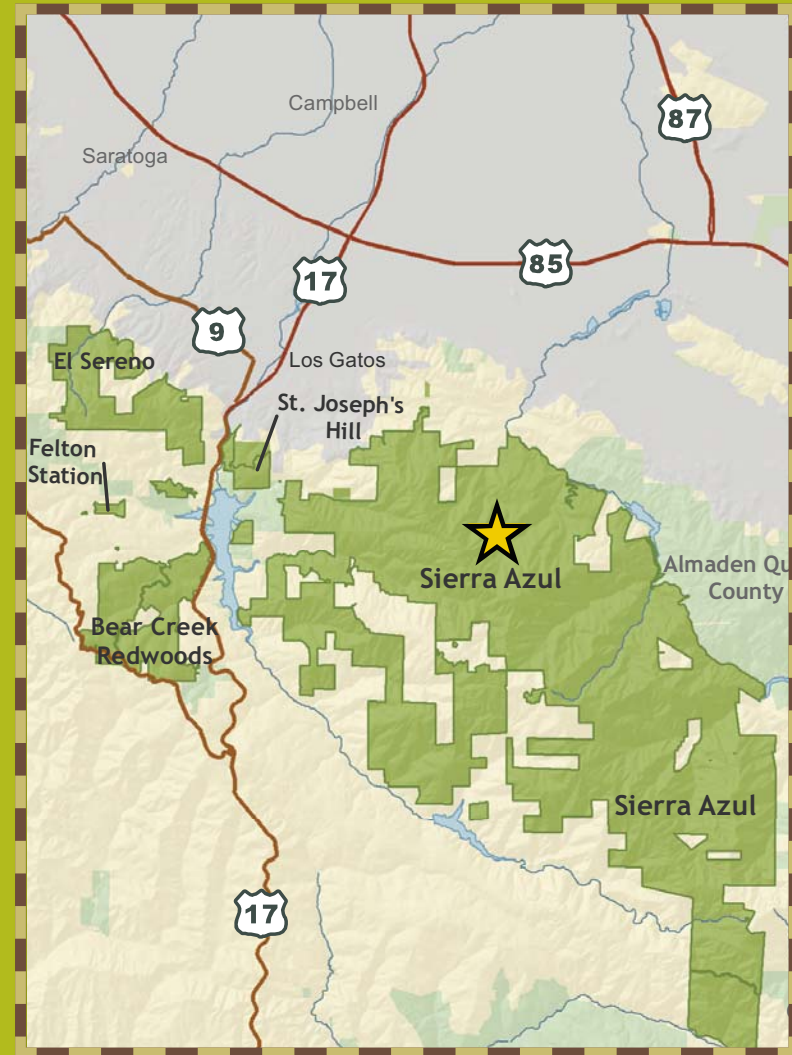
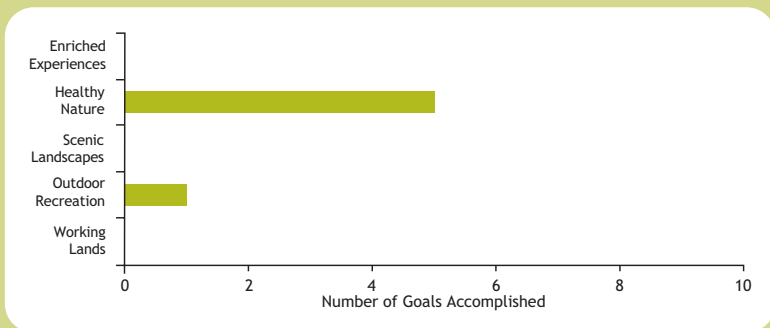
## Sierra Azul: Fire Management



Implement fire management practices to reduce fire risk at Sierra Azul OSP. Protect native plants, grasses & trees. Fuel reduction in Lexington Hills area.



### Goals Accomplished by This Action



# Chapter 6: Next Steps

The Vision Plan establishes a long-term, community-driven path to guide future work by Midpen to fulfill its mission. Over a 20-year period, Midpen will focus on the Top 25 most critical and effective priority actions (Tier 1); the additional priority actions represent longer-term opportunities (Tier 2). The resulting Vision Plan is a living document, with an accompanying geographic database (Conservation Atlas) that fully integrates community need with a comprehensive resource analysis that can serve as a model for both civic engagement and open space planning for years to come.

As part of implementing the priority action portfolios and the associated discrete projects, Midpen will host additional public engagement opportunities allowing community members to provide input on the specific design, location, and public uses. Each project will undergo environmental review, board approval, and regulatory agency permitting prior to completion.

Future Midpen board policy development may be needed prior to carrying out certain priority actions. Expected policy issues for board discussion include types of multiuse trails, appropriate situations for dog access in preserves, situations appropriate for public access to certain sensitive natural areas, and types of partnerships with cities and other agencies. Board deliberation on policy issues is expected to occur in the context of specific projects, where the discussion can be informed by site-specific information.

In the future, conditions will change and priorities may need to shift accordingly in response to those changes. To address this dynamic process, an overall review and update of the Vision Plan will be

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*The Vision Plan offers a balanced foundation for Midpen to make difficult choices in the future about what to emphasize and how to allocate resources*

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performed in approximately 10 years. In addition, each year Midpen's Board of Directors and staff will have an opportunity to fine-tune implementation of the priority action portfolios as part of the annual action plan and budget process and the capital improvement plan (CIP) process. Concurrently, Midpen will also have the opportunity to evaluate, further define, and prioritize the Tier 2 priority actions if capacity and resources are available to implement them.

To share updates on the implementation of the Vision Plan, Midpen will include and highlight Vision Plan priority actions as part of the annual year-end review and list of accomplishments that will be presented to the board and posted on the website for public review.

## Funding the Vision Plan

Following the board's approval of the Vision Plan in February 2014, an Expenditure Plan was developed to provide the basis for placing the Measure AA General Obligation Bond Measure on the June 3, 2014 ballot, and voters within Midpen's jurisdiction were asked to fund the Vision Plan priority actions. The Expenditure Plan included funding the land conservation, public access, and restoration project components (the permanent investment or "capital" projects) of the Top 25 (Tier 1) priority actions.

After successful passage of Measure AA, the Vision Plan Top 25 priority actions were evaluated by Midpen staff, the board of directors, and the community as part of a subsequent prioritization exercise that identified the near-term, short-term and long-term implementation schedule for the new funding source. This prioritization work led to a board-approved list of Measure AA near-term projects that formed the basis for the issuance of the first bond, development of Midpen's Annual Action Plan and Budget, and CIP process.

In addition to carrying out the capital projects that would be funded by Measure AA, Midpen will also work to implement other non-capital Vision Plan priority action portfolios, such as regional strategies and programmatic actions suitable for funding with Midpen's regular tax revenue. To fully accomplish the goals

and priority actions set forth in the Vision Plan, Midpen will diligently leverage its funding with other local, state, and federal funds to the extent possible, and build new partnerships with other related entities and private donors.



Karl Gahn

Monte Bello Open Space Preserve

# Acknowledgments

## Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Board of Directors



(Left to right: Jed Cyr, Nonette Hanko, Cecily Harris, Larry Hassett, Pete Siemens, Yoriko Kishimoto, Curt Riffle).

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Pete Siemens – Board Vice President (2014) | Ward 1: Cupertino, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Saratoga  |
| Yoriko Kishimoto                           | Ward 2: Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Palo Alto, Stanford, Sunnyvale                                     |
| Jed Cyr                                    | Ward 3: Sunnyvale   |
| Curt Riffle – Board Treasurer (2014)       | Ward 4: Los Altos, Mountain View  |
| Nonette Hanko                              | Ward 5: East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Stanford   |
| Larry Hassett – Board Secretary (2014)     | Ward 6: Atherton, La Honda, Loma Mar, Menlo Park, Pescadero, Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Gregorio, Woodside |
| Cecily Harris – Board President (2014)     | Ward 7: El Granada, Half Moon Bay, Montara, Moss Beach, Princeton, Redwood City, San Carlos, Woodside             |

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### Executive Staff

Steve Abbors, General Manager  
 Ana Montañó Ruiz, Assistant General Manager  
 Kevin Woodhouse, Assistant General Manager

### Vision Plan Project Team

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### Vision Plan Project Team (continued)

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 Michele Childs  
 Vicky Gou  
 Tina Hugg  
 Alex Roa  
 Jodi McGraw, Jodi McGraw Consulting  
 Linda Blong, Public Dialogue Consortium

### Community Advisory Committee

The following individuals voluntarily participated in the Community Advisory Committee and attended monthly project related meetings, field trips, and spent numerous hours reviewing materials. Midpen sincerely appreciated their contribution.

| Member  | Organization                                      |
|---|---|
| Alex Anderson   | Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers (SVMTB)            |
| Ann Waltonsmith                                       | Council member, City of Saratoga                  |
| Bern Smith  | Bay Area Ridge Trail Council                      |
| Carlos Romero   | Former Mayor, City of East Palo Alto              |
| Charles Krenz   | Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers (SVMTB)            |
| Chris Cruz  | West Valley College                               |
| Chris Overington                                      | Executive Director, Hidden Villa                  |
| Debbie Mytels   | Associate Director, Acterra                       |
| Dianne McKenna  | Sunnyvale Community Leader                        |
| Don Horsley<br>(and legislative aide Sarah Rosendahl) | Supervisor, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors |

| Member   | Organization   |
|--|--|
| Don Weden  | Santa Clara County Citizen                                       |
| Faye Brophy  | Equestrian Trail Riders' Action Committee                        |
| Henrietta Burroughs                                | East Palo Alto Citizen   |
| Jered Lawson                                       | Operator, Pie Ranch  |
| Joe Simitian<br>(and policy aide Kristina Loquist) | Supervisor, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors              |
| John Bourgeois                                     | Commissioner, Los Gatos Planning Commission                      |
| Karen Holman                                       | Palo Alto City Council, Palo Alto History Museum                 |
| Kellyx Nelson                                      | SMC Resource Conservation District                               |
| Larry Watson                                       | South Skyline Association  |
| Lennie Roberts                                     | Committee for Green Foothills                                    |
| Lynn Jackson                                       | Midpen Docent and Volunteer                                      |
| Marc Landgraf                                      | Peninsula Open Space Trust                                       |
| Melissa Hippard                                    | Program Director, Greenbelt Alliance                             |
| Mike Bushue  | Equestrian Trail Riders' Action Committee                        |
| Paul Heiple  | Acterra  |
| Philippe Cohen                                     | Jasper Ridge Ecological Preserve                                 |
| Reed Holderman                                     | Sempervirens Fund  |
| Robb Courtney                                      | Director, County of Santa Clara Department of Parks & Recreation |
| Ruth Waldhauer                                     | Open Space Preserve Neighbor                                     |
| Steve Wood   | REI Outdoor Education Programs Director                          |
| Sue Garner   | Saratoga/Monte Sereno Community Leader                           |
| Valentin Lopez                                     | Amah Mutsun Tribal Chairman                                      |

## Additional Planning, Public Engagement and Technical Support

### Midpen Staff

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Amanda Kim  
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Francis Reneau  
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Joel Silverman  
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Andrew Verbrugge  
Mike Williams

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Shawn Spano, Public Dialogue Consortium  
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University communications students

Chris Bui, The American Focus  
Justin Burks, Jodi McGraw Consulting  
Nadia Hamey, Big Creek Lumber  
Sibella Kraus, Sustainable Agriculture Education  
Brett Melone, Independent Consultant  
Hannah Ballard, Pacific Legacy, Inc.  
Elena Reese, Pacific Legacy, Inc.  
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Randy Anderson, Alta Planning and Design, Inc.  
Deborah Mills, Mills Design  
Alex Atkins, Alexander Atkins Design, Inc.

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La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve

Deanne Little



# Appendices

## Conservation Atlas

Conservation Atlas Maps:

- 1 Vegetation
- 2 Streams
- 3 Watersheds
- 4 Rare Species
- 5 Habitat Connectivity
- 6 Conservation Value
- 7 Forest Management
- 8 Sudden Oak Death
- 9 Fire Ecology
- 10 Fire Threat
- 11 Potential Climate Change Refuges

Due to space considerations, the Conservation Atlas has been made available online here: [www.openspace.org/vision](http://www.openspace.org/vision)

## Appendices

Due to space considerations, the Appendices have been made available here: [www.openspace.org/vision](http://www.openspace.org/vision)

### Appendix A: Vision Plan Work Plans

*Board Report (R-13-10): Consider Endorsing the Vision Planning Process.* January 2013. 9 pages.

*Communication, Engagement, and Public Participation Plan.* December 2012. 13 pages.

*Planning Team Tasks to Prepare the Vision Plan.* December 2012. 15 pages.

### Appendix B: Community Conversations Report

*Imagine the Future of Open Space: Community Conversations Summary Report.* July 2013. 15 pages plus attachments.

### Appendix C: Healthy Nature Planning and Analysis Reports

*Biodiversity of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.* May 2015. 81 pages.

*History of Timber Harvests within the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.* December 2014. 11 pages.

*Conservation Value Analysis for the Health Nature Theme of the Vision Plan.* October 2014. 18 pages.

### Appendix D: Recreation and Education Report

*Vision Plan Existing Conditions for Access, Recreation and Environmental Education.* October 2013. 27 pages.

### Appendix E: Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Resources Planning and Analysis Reports

*Cultural Resources Existing Conditions Report for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Vision Plan.* August 2013. 121 pages.

*Cultural Resources Stewardship Guide for the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Vision Plan.* March 2015. 8 pages.

*Natural, Cultural, and Scenic Landscapes Assessment.* March 2015. 5 pages.

### Appendix F: Working Lands Planning and Analysis Report

*Agriculture in the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District: Existing Conditions, Trends, Constraints and Opportunities.* June 2013. 42 pages.

### Appendix G: Public Deliberation Report

*Imagine the Future of Open Space: Public Deliberation Summary Report.* January 2014. 25 pages plus attachments.



Alphonse Tripodi

Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve



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