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**Public Workshop #1 Meeting Summary**  
**Sierra Azul/Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves Master Plan**

**PREPARED FOR:**  
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
EDAW and  
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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A: Meeting Materials**

- Agenda
- Key Contact Information
- Planning Process and Public Outreach Timeline
- Name Game Guide
- Mapping Exercise Worksheet
- Preliminary List of Key Issues
- Comment Card

### **Appendix B: Mapping Exercise Results**

- Maps with Meeting Participant Comments
- Flip Charts Recorded During Mapping Exercise



## ***Introduction***

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is conducting a 15-month planning process to develop a resource protection and visitor use plan for its two southernmost District Preserves.

The Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves contain over 18,000 acres and are the focus of a community-based planning process that will result in a Master Plan that sets forth the future vision for these lands consistent with the ecological values and mission of the District. The Plan will also establish key policies that will serve to guide the District in future on-the-ground implementation projects and will establish a clear public use plan while maintaining the District's resource and open space protection goals. The final Master Plan and appropriate environmental California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation is targeted for completion in spring 2006.

The overall goal of the planning effort is to ensure that the Master Plan will:

- Develop a long-term vision for each Preserve
- Protect, restore and enhance natural, cultural and historic resources in these rural landscapes
- Provide opportunities for low-intensity recreation access, interpretation and education that are ecologically sensitive and compatible with the protection of existing uses and resources, particularly maximizing linkages with nearby protected lands and regional trails
- Use a collaborative, community based planning approach
- Include cooperating agencies and organizations in the planning effort, and be compatible with existing agency plans and policies
- Meet all legal, regulatory and policy requirements
- Ensure flexibility and adaptability to changing or emerging issues and opportunities.

## ***Workshop Overview***

The District held its first "Public Knowledge Exchange Workshop" on Monday, April 4, 2005 from 6:30 – 9:30 pm at the Los Gatos Neighborhood Center located at 208 East Main Street in Los Gatos, California.

The workshop was announced in the March 2005 project newsletter that was sent to over 3,000 neighbors, landowners, and stakeholders from

various agencies, non-profit organizations and constituents with an interest in the planning process. Notification of the workshop was also distributed in a media release and posted on the District Web site.

Approximately 100 people attended the workshop to learn more about the Preserves and to help identify topics of exploration for the planning process. The input received will assist the District in developing a resource protection and visitor use plan for the Sierra Azul/Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves. The workshop was the first in a series of four public meetings on the Master Plan.

## ***Workshop Presentation***

### **Meeting Introduction**

Pete Siemens, District Board Director and Chair of the project Ad Hoc Subcommittee, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees. Next, Cathy Woodbury, Planning Director for the District, provided an overview of the workshop agenda and introduced the project staff and consultants. The meeting was then turned over to Ana Ruiz, Project Planner who is the Project Manager for the project.

### **District Overview and Mission**

Ana Ruiz began with a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the District's history, mission and newly revised boundaries. She stressed that the Master Plan must be consistent with the District's mission statement. The District's mission 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."

### **Planning Process Overview and Public Participation**

Ana Ruiz introduced Donna Plunkett of EDAW, the lead project consultant, who proceeded to give an overview of the planning process and the public participation program. Donna asked the group how they had learned about the meeting and the group responded that the newsletter was the primary source; other sources included the District's Web site, the press release issued by the District which yielded the March 2005 issue of the Mountain Network News article, the Los Gatos Horseman's newsletter and a notice posted at Trailhead Cyclery. Donna noted that the District's Web site will continue to be updated as the project progresses and be a source for receiving information. Also, Donna mentioned that a questionnaire was provided in the newsletter and that the District looks forward to getting the completed questionnaires. The

questionnaire can also be completed on-line at the project Web site for those that did not receive a copy by mail.

Donna Plunkett oriented the participants to the hand-outs including the agenda, key contact information and Planning Process and Public Outreach Timeline which she discussed in more detail. She also noted that comment cards were provided for written comments and should be placed in the envelope at the entryway. She stated that the name game guide and mapping exercise worksheet would be used later in the meeting. For reference, the meeting handouts are located in Appendix A.

Donna Plunkett reviewed the timeline schedule milestones and explained how the public will be involved at each phase. She noted that the first workshop provides an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Preserves and allows the District to gather the collective knowledge of the group. The next two workshops will focus on further detailing challenges and opportunities and reviewing specific sections of the Master Plan, including alternatives. Additional outreach will include a future newsletter, small group briefings, information on the Web site and Preserve site tours.

Kristy Ranieri, a public outreach consultant from CirclePoint, provided an overview of fourteen stakeholder interviews that were conducted with environmental and community interests as well as recreational users of the Preserves. She referenced the workshop handout entitled 'Preliminary List of Key Issues', which provides a summary of the key issues from the initial interviews.

## **Preserve Overview**

Matt Freeman, District Senior Planner, provided an overview of the Sierra Azul Preserve and Kirk Lenington, District Resource Planner, provided an overview of the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve using pictures and maps presented in PowerPoint format. The presentations included images and descriptions of the Preserves' locations, history, geography, biological resources and existing facilities. They presented an overview of the District's existing information for the Preserves including information that is contained in the Draft Resource Inventory for the Sierra Azul Preserve.

A slide was presented by Donna Plunkett to illustrate the District boundary within the Sierra Azul Preserve and the need for some boundary adjustments. She noted that there are three locations within the project area where the District boundary does not include the subject Preserves, namely, the eastern sections of Sierra Azul Preserve and the south edge which includes the Loma Prieta ranch property. The third location is at the southern tip of Bear Creek Preserve. The goal of the boundary extension process will be to also include District Preserves within the District's

boundary and make the District boundary conterminous with the sphere of influence.

The final PowerPoint slide, presented by Donna Plunkett, provided the framework for the mapping exercise. The slide reviewed some of the key challenges that the District must address in the Master Plan. Some of these challenges include managing sensitive habitats and rare and endangered species, invasive weeds and nonnative vegetation, the disposition of old and possibly historic structures, public safety issues around existing buildings including exposure to hazardous materials, limited public access due to current site conditions, sedimentation and erosion from trails and roads, trail connections across Highway 17 and Bear Creek Road, trail user conflicts and maintaining consistency with District policies and goals, across all District lands.

A member of the public asked how the District would incorporate and balance the different recreational user interests into the Master Plan. Donna Plunkett stressed that District's mission statement will guide the development of the Master Plan. Input collected at the workshop will be reviewed as part of the planning process and responses will be provided at future meetings as to whether certain items can be addressed in the Plan.

## ***Knowledge Exchange Session***

### **Name Game**

Donna Plunkett introduced the Knowledge Exchange Session by directing the group to the Name Game hand-out and asking participants to suggest some key words and names that evoke a sense of place for the Preserves and for a possible project name. She explained that the purpose of the exercise was to find a name that captures the essence of both the Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Preserves and is also more condensed than the current name.

Suggestions were recorded on a flip chart and generally resulted in the group feeling that the existing Preserve names are well-liked by the community and should not be modified for the Master Plan process. The participants noted that the Preserves each have unique attributes and a rich history, which makes it difficult to find a name to embody both.

Below is a list of the names suggested as part of the Name Game session:

- Sierra Azul East and West
- Umunhum Preserve

- Blue Bear Big Tree
- Loma Prieta Wilderness
- Sierra Azul Recreational Area
- Los Gatos Gap
- Los Gatos Redwoods Preserve (left)
- Los Gatos Blue Sky Preserve (right)
- Los Gatos Wilderness Project
- Moody's Preserve
- Sierra Verde
- Los Gatos Preserve
- Umunhum Thayer and Sombroso.

## Mapping Exercise

Donna Plunkett then presented the Mapping Exercise hand-out and described the purpose of the session to capture the collective knowledge of the group through recording information on the maps. She described the map stations, some of the sample questions that were listed in the hand-out and the tools that would be used such as stickers including dots, stars and post-it notes for writing text. Workshop participants dispersed to three tables located around the room. Each table had a large Preserve map, pens and various stickers.

Each group was led by a facilitator that further explained the purpose of the exercise and was available to answer questions. Facilitators emphasized that the information collected will be reviewed as part of the planning process and responses would be provided at future meetings as to whether certain items can be addressed in the Plan.

Participants drew on the maps, wrote notes and used stickers to indicate trail segments visited, special views and resource elements in the Preserves, entries to the Preserves, locations of conflicts, connections that would facilitate access between existing trails and features and locations that could benefit from new or additional parking. Additional comments and questions were captured on flip-charts provided at each map station. Comment cards were also available if participants chose not to speak in the groups.

Below is a summary of the comments received from the mapping exercise, the flip charts, verbal comments and comment cards. An overall comment repeated from many of the participants was that it is important to find a balance between providing access to the Preserves for recreational use and maintaining the District's mission to protect and preserve the

resources in the Preserve. This summary highlights the issues and concerns presented by workshop participants. This is not intended to be a transcript that captures comments and issues verbatim. Comments are sorted by geographical area and copies of the marked-up maps and flipcharts have been scanned and are included in Appendix B.

### ***West of Bear Creek Road***

Participants noted the historical value of the area west of Bear Creek Road and identified numerous vista points found in the Preserve. They indicated that before the District purchased the property, users were able to access the trail without a permit, as is required now.

Participants suggested the area be made available for multi-use recreation: bicycles, horses, hikers, dogs and motor cross bikes (*Motor cross bikes are not permitted on District preserves*). Some people suggested additional staging areas for horses along Summit Road. They recommended the provision of trails that safely connect this part of Bear Creek Redwoods to surrounding trails, for example, adding a connection from Lexington Reservoir to Summit Road. Many other participants felt that the District should not carve up the Preserve with too many trails.

### ***East of Bear Creek Road***

Participants representing various uses showed a lot of interest in opening up Bear Creek Redwoods. The surrounding neighbors suggested that the District provide an unlimited pass to those people living near the Preserve rather than requiring neighbors to attain access permits. Participants suggested opening the Preserve to bicycles, maintaining existing and providing more trails for equestrians, and allowing dogs on and off-leash and providing an area for motor cross and dirt bikes (*Motor cross and dirt bikes are not permitted on District preserves*). One participant suggested that user conflicts could be minimized if more trails are made available. Some people suggested numerous trail configurations including: 1) a connector trail to Lexington Reservoir at Bear Creek Road and Highway 17, 2) a connector trail from Bear Creek Loop and 3) a loop trail through the Sisters of Presentation land. Participants noted the need for a safe location to cross Highway 17 between Lexington and Bear Creek Redwoods. Some people also suggested using the Alma College site to house an educational center focused on mountain history.

Many participants noted that they would like Bear Creek Stables to remain on site, but one participant felt the horses impact the creek and should be removed. Other people suggested that there is a need for more parking and staging areas in the Preserve that could be located at the old Christmas tree farm or Alma College. Some participants expressed concern for the current condition of Summit Road at the south end of Bear

Creek Redwoods and the future ability of the road to support an increase in traffic.

### ***Lexington Reservoir***

Many participants indicated that the Lexington Reservoir area is a well used access point to Sierra Azul Preserve. Numerous people felt that this area could provide a safe location for parking, specifically for horse trailers. One participant suggested providing parking at the southern end of the reservoir to access Cathedral Oaks Area. One participant felt that providing access off Highway 17 would expose the Preserve to abuse by commuters and others.

Participants suggested a multi-use trail connection from the Lexington Reservoir Area to Skyline Boulevard. A few people noted that a dog park area could be added near Los Gatos (both on and off-leash).

### ***Summit Road***

Participants would like to see more parking and access available off Summit Road. They primarily noted a need for parking and staging areas to access Bear Creek Redwoods, but also suggested areas near the San Jose Water Company's property that would provide access to Sierra Azul – with the cooperation of the water company. Others were concerned about the poor condition of Summit Road and the potential impacts that could be caused by increased traffic.

### ***Cathedral Oaks Area***

Many participants were interested in accessing trails in Cathedral Oaks for multi-use. They specifically mentioned wanting access to trails off Soda Springs Road and Moodys Trail. One participant suggested an alternate trail could be a connection to the southern part of Lexington Reservoir. Another participant suggested providing trails that connect with Limekiln Trail, the Mt. Umunhum area and Summit Road.

### ***Kennedy Limekiln Area***

Many participants indicated that there is frequent use of the parking area by the Kennedy Road trailhead. They suggested that more parking, including trailer friendly parking for horses, at the trailhead would be useful. Participants commented that there are numerous locations in this area for special views and vistas along Priest Rock and Kennedy Trails. Equestrians noted that they appreciate the water trough located along Limekiln Trail. Some people indicated that hikers and horses successfully share the trails in this area, but they have seen conflicts with dogs and other users. Participants also suggested new trails such as connecting Kennedy Trail with Priest Rock and Limekiln Trail to create more loop opportunities.

### ***Rancho de Guadalupe Area***

Many participants noted that it would be nice to have the Rancho de Guadalupe area opened for public use. Some people mentioned the special views from Mt. El Sombroso. Participants suggested providing more parking off Hicks Road, including space for horse trailers. Many suggestions for trail configurations were provided such as connecting Hicks Road to: 1) Woods Trail giving access to Mt. El Sombroso, 2) Bay Area Ridge Trail and 3) Kennedy Road Trail. Participants requested that trails be designed to support multi-use including downhill portions for mountain bikes.

### ***Hicks Road Area***

Many participants indicated that the Hicks Road area is a common access point to Woods Trail. Many people suggested providing more parking in this area, including space for horse trailers.

### ***Mt. Thayer Area***

Participants commented that Mt. Thayer could be opened for public use after completing the necessary clean-up. Participants suggested providing multi-use loop trails and coordinating with the San Jose Water Company to provide connections to surrounding properties.

### ***Mt. Umunhum Area***

Many participants suggested opening the Mt. Umunhum area for public use. Others identified the need to protect the wildlife living in the area. Many people noted the special views and star gazing opportunities available at the top of Mt. Umunhum. Participants suggested removing the roads in the area and replacing them with multi-use trails connecting to surrounding areas and existing trails (e.g. Bald Mountain, San Jose Water Company's property, and Rattlesnake Trail to Soquel Demonstration Forest). They indicated that there is a need to access properties in the area to provide contiguous trails. Other noted that the District should design trails and parking areas that respect and bypass the private properties.

Other uses suggested by participants included providing a launch area and access point for hang gliders and paragliders. Participants felt that the District should retain and restore the monolith. One participant noted that the public could help the District lobby Congress for the funds to clean-up the site. Other people suggested that the District will need to provide more ranger patrols if the area is opened to public use.

### ***Southern Tip of Sierra Azul/Rattlesnake Trail Area***

Several participants noted that there are great views from Loma Prieta Peak. Some participants want to see this area opened for multi-use

specifically for mountain bikes. Participants suggested a connector trail from Mt. Umunhum to Soquel Demonstration Forest via Rattlesnake Trail. A few participants noted that bikes and horses conflict on the downward slope of Rattlesnake Trail between Loma Alta Avenue and Mt. Bache Road. Some participants suggested creating a separate trail for bikes and horses at this location. They also suggested that bicyclists, equestrians, and other users could volunteer to restore and build trails in this area. Participants indicated the need for access and parking at Summit and Highland Roads noting that there are private properties in the area that should not be impacted.

### ***Other Comments / Questions***

Workshop participants also provided general comments that apply to the overall Master Plan.

Many participants would like to see the Preserves opened to the public for multi-use recreation. They suggested providing more trails that allow connections to other parts of the Preserves and the surrounding areas with public use trails (e.g. connecting the Bay Area Ridge Trail through Sierra Azul to Demonstration Forest to Nicene Marks to New Brighton and on to the ocean). Participants wanted to know what the District's trail density and mileage goals are for these Preserves. Also, they would like to have loop trail options rather than the current configuration that requires return trips on the same trail. Participants noted that the topography of the land should dictate the trail design. Some participants commented that trail design could be used strategically to facilitate multi-use and minimize conflicts. Others noted the opportunity to utilize volunteers to assist in trail restoration and construction and that the District should review the volunteer effort in El Corte Madera Open Space Preserve. Some participants expressed concern about multi-use trails and the potential conflicts among users that could be addressed in the Master Plan.

Participants noted that special areas should be designated for habitat preservation and management. Others commented on the historical value of the Preserves and stated that the Master Plan should recognize and incorporate these resources.

Attendees recommended that the District continue to communicate with surrounding neighbors (public and private), to ensure coordination and agreement on activities.

Participants want to know what the District paid for the property, what funds are available to acquire more land and provide for enhancement projects. They also want to understand the scope of the District's sphere of influence and determine if there will be consequences for surrounding neighbors.

## ***Input Received from Comment Cards***

Cards were provided for workshop participants that preferred to hand-write their comments. Five written comment cards were submitted at the workshop and a summary is provided below. This summary does not include input submitted on the questionnaire that was provided in the newsletter. A summary of the input received from the questionnaires will be provided in a separate report.

One participant suggested that a launch area and access point for hang gliders and paragliders should be considered, especially from Mt. Umunhum's peak. Another participant requested that access to the peak of Mt. Umunhum and Mt. Thayer be considered and noted that the Mt. Umunhum monolith building should not be removed. One commenter suggested providing single-track trails for bikes with natural turns to slow down riders and asked the District to consider keeping the Preserves open until 10:00 pm. A request for an off-leash dog park within the Preserves was noted as well.

## ***Prioritization of Topics***

At the end of the session, participants were given stickers with numbers from 1 to 3, and were asked to choose their top three topics that they would like to see addressed in the Plan. The results of the prioritization exercise reflect the diverse interests represented by the workshop participants because no one issue received a majority of prioritization stickers. In general, the key issues suggested for review as part of the Master Plan process include options for the various recreational users, trail design options and the overall goal to protect the resources and integrity of the Preserves. Participants showed keen interest in opening closed areas such as Rancho de Guadalupe for public use, providing easy access to trails off existing roadways and linking trails in the Preserves to other surrounding public areas and trails.

## ***Conclusion and Next Steps***

Donna Plunkett closed the meeting with a reminder of the upcoming steps in the Master Plan process. In the next few months, the team will review the input from the workshop and analyze the information in conjunction with the Preserves' natural resources and the District's mission statement.

The planning team will collect additional data and identify key Plan issues and goals. The next public workshop, planned for summer 2005, will present the challenges and opportunities and the framework for the alternative development. The District will also coordinate with interested community members to schedule site tours, focus group meetings and additional stakeholder interviews as needed. Donna Plunkett asked for a raise of hands to see how many people would be interested in Preserve

tours and many people seemed interested. It was noted that dates would be posted on the District Web site and people would be able to choose their preferred date. Donna accepted final questions from the group, including the following:

- What level of outreach activities are planned for the Santa Cruz Mountains?

*All interested parties are encouraged to attend these public meetings to hear project information and provide comments. Any interested groups can request a separate presentation.*

- Will the plan include a fire management policy?

*Yes, a fire management policy will be included in the Plan's management goals.*

- What locations would the land tours cover? Will the tour include Mt. Umunhum? The tours should include areas that are closed to the public.

*The tours will include as much area as can be covered in the time allotted. Those people interested in specific areas should indicate them in the emails sent to Ana Ruiz.*

- Will the District send out additional surveys/questionnaires?

*The District is accepting survey/questionnaire responses on an on-going basis. The District will notify participants of any future surveys/questionnaires distributed in relation to this project.*

- Can the District accept donations? Are they tax deductible?

*The District can accept donations, but the District is not a 501(c)(3), so not all donations are tax deductible. This District is a special district as per California regulation, a form of local government.*

- Will Bear Creek Stables remain on the District's property in Bear Creek Redwoods?

*We do not know at this point if the stables will remain. The District will review these types of issues during the planning process.*