

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
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Sierra Azul / Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves MASTER PLAN

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

NEWSLETTER #1

PLANNING WORK BEGINS AT SIERRA AZUL AND BEAR CREEK REDWOODS PRESERVES

District staff have begun a 15-month planning process to develop a resource protection and visitor use plan for the two southernmost District Preserves. The Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves contain over 18,000 acres and will be the focus of a community-based planning process resulting in a Plan that sets forth the future vision for these lands. The Plan will also establish key policies that will guide the District in future on-the-ground implementation projects and will establish a clear public use plan while fulfilling the District's resource and open space protection goals and mission.

Key to this planning process will be participation by environmental groups, landowners, recreation enthusiasts, and all stakeholders who are interested in these Preserves. Please e-mail or write the District (see back of newsletter) if you would like to be added to the mailing list for this Plan. Updates and information about this project can be found at the home page on the District's Web site (www.openspace.org). Future mailings will highlight the various aspects of the planning process and explain how you can participate and stay involved. District staff look forward to hearing from you and partnering with all stakeholders to develop a balanced plan to maintain the wild nature of these lands within the surrounding urbanized setting. For more background and visitor use information on these Preserves, please select the "Choose a Preserve" option on the District's Web site.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Stay Informed: This newsletter will keep you informed on the progress of the Master Plan process. It will cover both the Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods areas. Over the next 15 months, we'll be working together to discuss and evaluate a variety of planning topics, including, habitat protection, and education and interpretive programs, and low-intensity recreation, just to name a few. This newsletter will track our progress and notify you of upcoming public workshops.

Fill Out the Questionnaire: The enclosed questionnaire will help us understand your key issues, ideas, and concerns. Tell us what you like about the Preserves, what you would like to see added, or what could be improved!

Attend the Public Workshops: We will host three public workshops for the Master Plan. The first workshop will be held on Monday, April 4 at 6:30 pm at the Los Gatos Neighborhood Center. The workshop will provide a forum to identify topics of exploration for the planning process. Please join us!

SIERRA AZUL / BEAR CREEK REDWOODS OPEN SPACE PRESERVES M A S T E R P L A N

Calendar of Events

PLANNING PROCESS AT A GLANCE

WINTER 2004	SPRING 2005	SUMMER 2005	FALL/WINTER 2005	SPRING/SUMMER 2006
Information Gathering Fieldwork	Summarize Existing Conditions PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #1	Discuss Challenges and Opportunities Develop Plan Alternatives PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #2	Prepare Draft Plan PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP #3	Distribute Final Plans and Environmental Review Agency Approvals Public Review of Draft Plan

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Mission Statement:

"To acquire and preserve a regional green belt of open space land in perpetuity; protect and restore the natural environment; and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education."

PARTICIPATION IS THE KEY TO A GREAT PLAN!

If you would like to receive the newsletters and notices about future workshops, or wish to send written comments, please contact Ana Ruiz, Project Planner, at:

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, CA 94022
650.691.1200
masterplan@openspace.org
(for questions or comments about the planning process)

For general information about preserve hours and activities, please call or send an e-mail to:
650.691.1200
info@openspace.org

Visit Our Web site
www.openspace.org



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Workshop Location

Public Knowledge Exchange Workshop

Monday, April 4, 2005
Time: 6:30 – 10:00 PM
Los Gatos Neighborhood Center
208 East Main Street
Los Gatos, CA 95033
(Across the street from the Saratoga/Los Gatos Recreation Department)

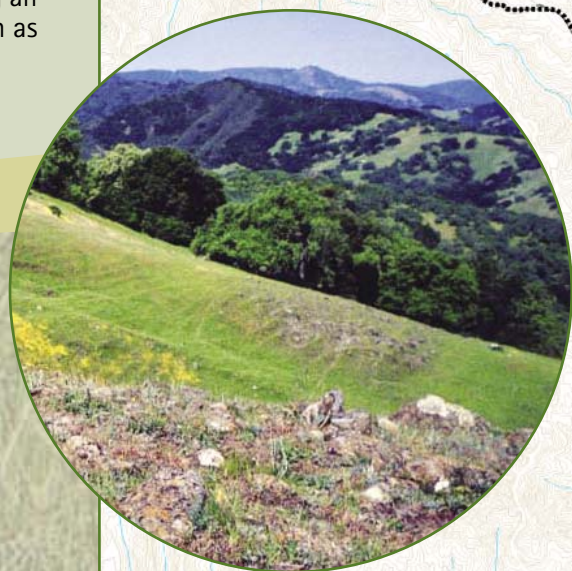
March 2005



BEAR CREEK REDWOODS OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

Bear Creek Redwoods is located west of Lexington Reservoir and Highway 17. At over 1,300 acres, Bear Creek Redwoods abounds with Douglas fir, oak, and madrone as well as the redwoods for which it is named.

There are also grasslands, ponds, and perennial creeks. The property contains a host of cultural resources including prehistoric and historic era features, amongst them, the former Alma College site. Challenges at Bear Creek Redwoods include access limitations along Bear Creek Road, use of the western portion of the Preserve and future land uses. Vestiges of previous landscape use including an old vineyard also pose natural resource challenges such as controlling exotic and invasive species.



MASTER PLAN PUBLIC PROCESS

The Master Plan process includes the following phases (opportunities for public participation are noted in *italics*):

Information Gathering + Fieldwork

- Site orientation
- Resource inventory and data collection
- *Stakeholder interviews*

Existing Conditions Summary

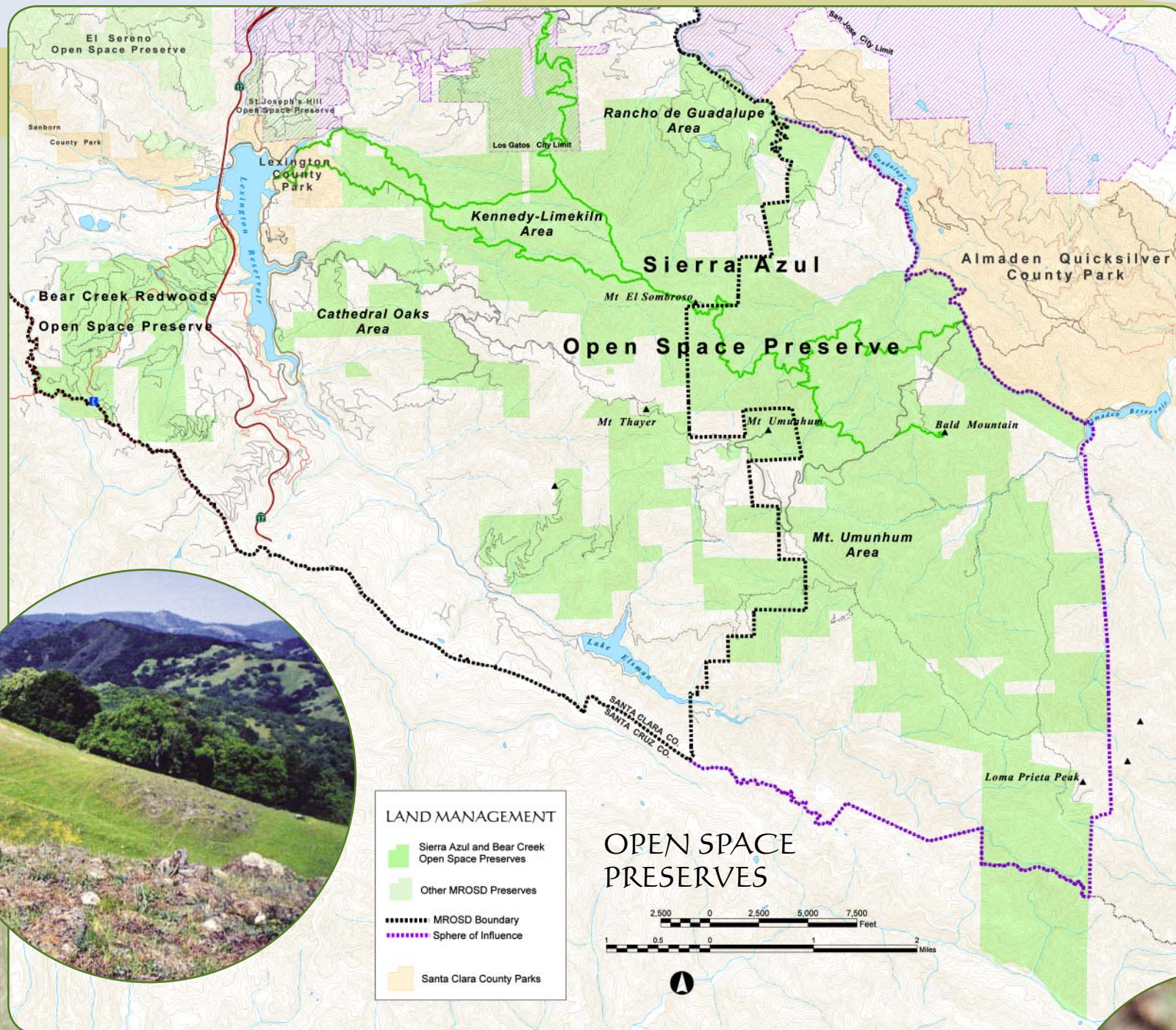
- Additional data collection, review, and field reconnaissance
- *Public knowledge exchange workshop*
- Identify stakeholder issues
- *Site tours and/or focus group meetings*

Challenges and Opportunities + Plan Alternatives

- Analyze challenges and opportunities
- *Site tours and/or focus group meetings*
- Develop plan alternatives
- *Public workshop to discuss alternatives*

Draft Plan Preparation

- Develop plan policies + guidelines
- *Public open house*
- Environmental impact analysis and mitigation
- *Draft plan public workshop*
- *Final plan approval*



Sierra Azul Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves

Stakeholder Interview Guide

PURPOSE
To get community input that will inform the development of a resource protection and use and management plan for the Sierra Azul and Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves.

FORMAT
Informal phone interviews will be conducted and each call is anticipated to take 30 minutes to an hour, with approximately 10 minutes for an introduction and overview and the rest of the time for discussion. The focus will be to get a sense of key issues, interests and comments. It is not intended to be a forum for in-depth technical discussions about the planning process. A summary of interviews will be prepared.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

History/Involvement

- How familiar are you with the Preserves? Do you live in the area and if so for how long?
- Before talking to me, how familiar were you with this planning process?
- Are there other local planning projects or issues that you are involved with?

General Use

- How do you use the Preserves (i.e. hiking, mountain biking, on horseback, walking a dog, leading hikes, picnicking, etc.)?
- Have you observed others using the Preserves? If so, how did they use the land?
- How do you access the Preserves? Which gate do you pass to enter the Preserves?
- What are your destinations within the Preserves?
- Do you use certain trails on a regular basis? If so, what is your normal route?
- When do you primarily visit the Preserves?
- Is there a vista point or an area of the Preserves that you particularly enjoy?
- What is your impression of the existing trail system?

Issues/Interests

- What do you value most about the Preserves?
- What do you like least about the Preserves?
- What do you think can be done to enhance the Preserves and your enjoyment of the land?
- Do you have any concerns regarding the addition of new trails or trail facilities? Are there certain facilities that you would like to see provided?
- Are there any special uses that you would like the District to consider for this area?
- What are your key issues or topics regarding the Preserves that should be considered in the development of this plan?
- If you could rank these issues, what would be your top 2 or 3 most important?

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS COMPLETED

Many thanks to those who participated in our stakeholder interviews. We appreciate your ideas and feedback about how you use the preserves and what you think the planning process should address. The District developed an interview guide that was used for the phone interviews and over a dozen stakeholders participated in this process. A summary of the interviews will be available at the April 4 public workshop.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Can you think of a name that would embody both areas? We will be asking for your ideas and thoughts about this at the first public workshop on April 4. Please bring your name suggestions to the workshop!

SIERRA AZUL OPEN SPACE PRESERVE

With its rugged, wild character, Sierra Azul provides a sharp contrast with its surrounding heavily urbanized southern Santa Clara Valley and San Jose. Totaling over 17,000 acres, the District's largest preserve is divided into four areas: the popular Kennedy-Limekiln Area that is accessible from Kennedy Road and Highway 17, the Cathedral Oaks and Rancho de Guadalupe Areas which are currently closed to the public, and the Mt. Umunhum Area that features the 3,486-foot peak and the local landmark monolith. Although known for its chaparral-covered slopes, Sierra Azul has pockets of serpentine grasslands, bay and blue oak woodlands, and lush riparian corridors, including the headwaters of Los Gatos and Guadalupe Creeks. Home to deer, bobcat, coyote, and the federally threatened red-legged frog, it also provides prime habitat for the elusive and far-ranging mountain lion. Historic uses of the area include timber logging and mercury mining in the mid-late 1800s. A thorough resource inventory has been compiled for Sierra Azul including geological, hydrological, botanical, wildlife and cultural resources and was completed in 2001. This information will be utilized in the development of the Master Plan.



INTEGRATED PRESERVE PLAN

Bear Creek Redwoods and Sierra Azul are very distinct and currently offer different open space experiences. One of the goals of the Master Plan is to provide a unified plan that will serve these areas together. The Plan will strive to recognize each area for its unique characteristics, while providing an integrated management approach for resource protection and future visitor use. The District and its consultant team for the Plan will weave public participation and environmental review throughout the Master Plan process.



There is a rich mosaic of landscapes and visitor usage across the vast acreage that makes up both Preserves. Through a participatory process, the Master Plan will protect the abundance of wildlife, plant species, and their habitats, preserve the cultural history of these landscapes, develop creative ideas for low-intensity recreation, and form a diverse trail network that links to the surrounding open space.