



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-24-07  
Meeting 24-01  
January 10, 2024

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Award of Contract with Ascent Environmental to provide Planning and Environmental Review (CEQA) Services for the Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve Comprehensive Use and Management Plan

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *den*

1. Authorize the General Manager to enter into a contract with Ascent Environmental to provide services to support the Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan for a base amount not to exceed \$142,175.
2. Authorize a 15% contingency of \$21,326 to be awarded if necessary, to cover unforeseen conditions, for a total contract amount not-to-exceed \$163,501.
3. Authorize a separate contract allowance of \$20,000 for additional technical studies, if needed, bringing the not-to-exceed contract amount to \$183,501.

### SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) seeks assistance from a qualified consultant to provide planning and environmental review services for the Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP). The CUMP will incorporate proposed new public access improvements and resource and land management activities, including recommended actions for the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area, Highway 35 Trail Crossing and Parking Expansion, Purisima Multimodal Access Implementation, and Irish Ridge Restoration Projects at the preserve. The CUMP will serve as the basis for conducting environmental review to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on September 8, 2023, and three firms submitted proposals on October 5, 2023. Based on the RFP results, the General Manager recommends awarding a contract to Ascent Environmental for a base amount of \$142,175 and authorizing a 15% contingency in the amount of \$21,326. The General Manager also recommends authorizing a separate contract allowance of \$20,000 for additional technical studies that may be necessary to complete the environmental review, for a total not-to-exceed contract amount of \$183,501. Currently, CEQA costs are distributed among numerous projects and a project budget for the CUMP. During an upcoming quarterly review, the General Manager will move the CEQA funds from the individual projects to the CUMP budget. Once this action is taken, there will be sufficient funds in the adopted Fiscal Year 2023-24 (FY24) project budget to cover the cost of the recommendation. Funding for future years budgets will be requested as part of the annual Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) and budget process.

## DISCUSSION

Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Preserve, Purisima) is located on the western slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains overlooking Half Moon Bay. Currently, 2,838 acres of the 5,412-acre Preserve are open to the public, with over 20 miles of hiking, bicycling and/or equestrian trails. Purisima is a popular recreational destination among residents of San Mateo County, neighboring areas, and the broader San Francisco Bay Area region. There are four trailhead entrances: (1) North Ridge parking lot; (2) Purisima Creek Road/Higgins Canyon parking area; (3) Redwood trailhead entrance and (4) Grabtown Gulch trailhead entrance.

The District is in the process of planning for various new public access and restoration activities at the Preserve. To streamline the planning and environmental review process, the District is developing a Comprehensive Use and Management Plan (CUMP) to guide long term land management, operations and public access actions and activities within the Preserve with the goal of protecting and enhancing the natural resources while responsibly integrating necessary land management activities and ecologically sensitive public access. The detailed CUMP will address all aspects of use and management, in particular, the substantial new public access and resource management projects that are currently in planning and/or design. The CUMP will be based on a comprehensive resource analysis, technical studies and public input conducted as part of these individual projects and evaluate existing and proposed uses. It will represent both long-term (5-15 years) goals and short-term (1-5 years) goals.

The following key projects will be incorporated into the CUMP and evaluated in the associated environmental review document.

### Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking Area Expansion Project

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is implementing a new Bay Area Ridge Trail segment on their watershed lands that will terminate near the District's Purisima Preserve. Staff completed a feasibility study evaluating a multi-use trail crossing on Highway 35 to provide an important regional trail connection between existing segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail from the North Ridge trailhead to this new extension of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. The feasibility study also evaluated onsite parking expansion and reconfiguration of the North Ridge parking area to better address current and future parking demand at this location. The Board approved the feasibility study in November 2023, including selection of a conceptual parking design and multi-use trail crossing location. Design development to support the CEQA analysis is anticipated to begin in spring 2024, after the solicitation of a design team is completed and an award of contract is approved by the Board.

### Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Project

The District is pursuing a 15-mile east-west link as part of the regional trail network that connects the Bay Area Ridge Trail with the California Coastal Trail, which is also anticipated to be a significant segment of the more extensive Bay to Sea Trail. The Project's feasibility study, which identifies the proposed trail alignment and concept designs for a new trailhead and parking area off Verde Road was approved by the Board in May 2023. The project also includes interior Preserve connector trails and trail crossings across Verde Road and Highway 1. Design development to support the CEQA analysis was initiated in fall 2023.

### Purisima Multimodal Access and Transportation Demand Management Project

The Multimodal Access and Transportation Demand Study (Study) examined current access and parking conditions at the Preserve to identify strategies for reducing parking demand, managing parking resources, improving multimodal access, enhancing visitor experience, and mitigating negative impacts of overflow parking and traffic to nearby residents. A toolbox of high priority Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies were identified and customized to the Preserve. The Board approved the Study in October 2022 and staff are working to implement the recommended TDMs. Several high priority TDMs are directly related to and being incorporated into the design of the new Purisima-to-the-Sea parking area and the expanded North Ridge parking area. An award of contract for transportation planning services to support implementation of other TDM measures will be brought to the Board in January 2024.

### Irish Ridge Habitat Restoration Project

The project aims to restore a site dominated by non-native, invasive plants that are reducing habitat quality and invading adjacent natural areas. Moreover, portions of the site with native plant communities feature excessive woody debris that could serve as ladder fuels, thereby increasing the risk of wildland fire. The project aims to remove the invasive plants and selectively thin the unnaturally high-density forested areas. This project may serve as mitigation for one or more District projects within the Preserve, such as the adjacent Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail project. Development of the habitat restoration plan is underway.

### ***Contract Scope of Work***

An Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration is anticipated to be the appropriate environmental review document for the CUMP (and all the projects that fall under the CUMP). If a higher level of environmental review is determined to be necessary during the Initial Study, the scope (and the contract, if necessary) would need to be amended.

The recommended contract includes an allowance for additional technical studies, as necessary, and determined through completion of Task 1. Studies could include additional transportation analysis, cultural and tribal cultural resources assessments, air quality modeling, biological surveys, or other studies necessary to inform the plan or CEQA analysis.

### ***Consultant Selection***

On September 8, 2023, staff issued a request for proposals (RFP) via Periscope, posted the RFP on the District's website, and sent direct emails to a list of qualified firms. A pre-proposal site tour was held on September 21, 2023, attended by representatives from four firms. The following three firms submitted proposals by the October 5, 2023 deadline.

Firm	Location	Proposed Fees
Ascent Environmental	Berkeley, CA	\$142,175*
AECOM	Sacramento, CA	\$149,678
SWCA	Half Moon Bay, CA	\$149,960

\*Ascent's cost reflects a negotiated 5% reduction.

Evaluation criteria were determined prior to the release of the RFP that included the quality of proposal, implementation approach and expertise. After a thorough review of all proposals, Ascent was deemed as the most qualified and best suited for the project at a fair and reasonable price. Ascent demonstrated a clear understanding of the project and has relevant experience working on similar District projects, including preparation of an IS/MND for the La Honda

Creek Master Plan and Environmental Impact Reports for the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan and the Mount Umunhum Site Restoration and Public Access Plan. During contract negotiations, staff and Ascent identified areas of cost savings, reducing Ascent's fees by approximately 5%.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The FY24 adopted budget includes \$30,000 for the Purisima CUMP project MAA03-012, as well as CEQA funding within the budgets of individual projects that will be covered by the CUMP (i.e., Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking Area Expansion Project, Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Project, Purisima Multimodal Access and Transportation Demand Management Project, and Irish Ridge Habitat Restoration Project). During an upcoming quarterly review, the General Manager will move the CEQA funds from the individual projects to the CUMP budget to ensure there are sufficient funds in the adopted Fiscal FY24 project budget to cover the cost of the recommendation. Funding for future years budgets will be requested as part of the annual CIAP and budget process.

Purisima Preserve Comprehensive Use and Management Plan MAA03-012	Prior Year Actuals	FY24 Adopted	FY25 Projected	FY26 Projected	Estimated Future Years	TOTAL
<b>Total Budget (fund 30):</b>	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$60,000
Spent-to-Date (as of 12/6/23):	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Encumbrances:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ascent Environmental Contract:	\$0	(\$60,000)	(\$82,175)	\$0	\$0	(\$142,175)
15% Contingency:	\$0	\$0	(\$21,326)	\$0	\$0	(\$21,326)
Allowance:	\$0	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	\$0	\$0	(\$20,000)
<b>Budget Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$40,000)*</b>	<b>(\$83,501)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$123,501)</b>

\*An upcoming quarterly budget adjustment will shift CEQA funds from individual Purisima projects to this CUMP budget to cover the cost of the recommended CEQA contract.

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 03 Purisima Creek Redwoods — Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail, Watershed Protection and Conservation Grazing allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining. On June 14, 2023 (R-23-67), the Board reallocated \$6.4 million more to Measure AA Portfolio #03 from other completed portfolios to reduce the funding gap to \$1.3 million. Staff will continue to seek outside grant funds to fill the remaining funding gap.

<b>MAA03 Purisima Creek Redwoods — Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail, Watershed Protection and Conservation Grazing Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$13,965,920</b>
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$318,312
Interest Income Allocation:	\$450,000
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$14,734,232</b>
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 12/6/23):	(\$8,236,622)
Encumbrances:	(\$200,952)
Remaining FY24 Project Budgets:	(\$422,501)
Future MAA03 project costs (projected through FY27):	(\$7,162,481)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$16,022,556)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>(\$1,288,324)</b>

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 03 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

<b>MAA03 Purisima Creek Redwoods — Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail, Watershed Protection and Conservation Grazing Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$13,965,920</b>
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$318,312
Interest Income Allocation:	\$450,000
<b>Total Portfolio Allocation:</b>	<b>\$14,734,232</b>
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
03-001 Purisima Uplands Lot Line Adjustment and Property Transfer	(\$425,113)
03-002 Purisima Upland Site Clean up and Soil Remediation	(\$1,006,061)
03-003 Purisima Creek Fence Construction	(\$169,190)
03-004 Harkins Bridge Replacement	(\$516,916)
03-005 Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area - Phase I Feasibility Study	(\$594,340)
03-006 South Cowell Upland Land Conservation	(\$6,209,934)
03-007 Purisima-to-the-Sea Habitat Enhancement and Water Supply Improvement Plan	(\$460,000)
03-008 Rieser-Nelson Land Purchase	(\$16,715)
03-009 Purisima-to-the-Sea Parking	(\$4,631,850)
03-010 Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail	(\$1,278,436)
03-011 Lobitos Creek Fisheries Restoration	(\$654,000)
03-012 Purisima-to-the-Sea Comprehensive Use and Management Plan	(\$60,000)
<b>Total Portfolio Expenditures:</b>	<b>(\$16,022,556)</b>
<b>Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):</b>	<b>(\$1,288,324)</b>

## PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

**February 9, 2022 Board Meeting:** Award of Contract with Vollmar Natural Land Consulting for the Preparation of **Habitat Restoration Plans for the Irish Ridge Area** of Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve ([R-22-17](#), [meeting minutes](#))

**November 9, 2022 Board Meeting:** Affirmation of the Findings and Recommendations of the **Purisima Multimodal Access and Transportation Demand Management Study Report** ([R-22-123](#), [meeting minutes](#))

**May 24, 2023 Board Meeting:** **Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Feasibility Study**, Preferred Trail Alignment and Parking Area Conceptual Design ([R-23-52](#), [meeting minutes](#))

**November 8, 2023 Board Meeting:** **Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking Feasibility Study**, Trail Crossing and Parking Area Expansion Conceptual Design ([R-23-137](#), [meeting minutes](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

The scope associated with the contract under Board consideration includes completion of the necessary environmental review under CEQA for the implementation of the actions associated

with the Purisima CUMP. The Board will have the opportunity to review and consider the draft CUMP at a future Board meeting.

### NEXT STEPS

Following Board approval, the General Manager will execute a contract with Ascent to support the development of CUMP and complete the environmental review as required under CEQA based on the tentative schedule outlined below.

Phase	Schedule
Project Kickoff and Background Information Review	Winter/Spring 2024
Project Description Development	Summer/Fall 2024
IS/MND Development and Public Review	Winter/Spring 2025
CEQA Certification	Summer/Fall 2025

#### Attachment

1. Project Locations Map

#### Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, Planning Manager, Planning Department

#### Prepared by:

Gretchen Laustsen, Senior Planner, Planning Department

#### Contact person:

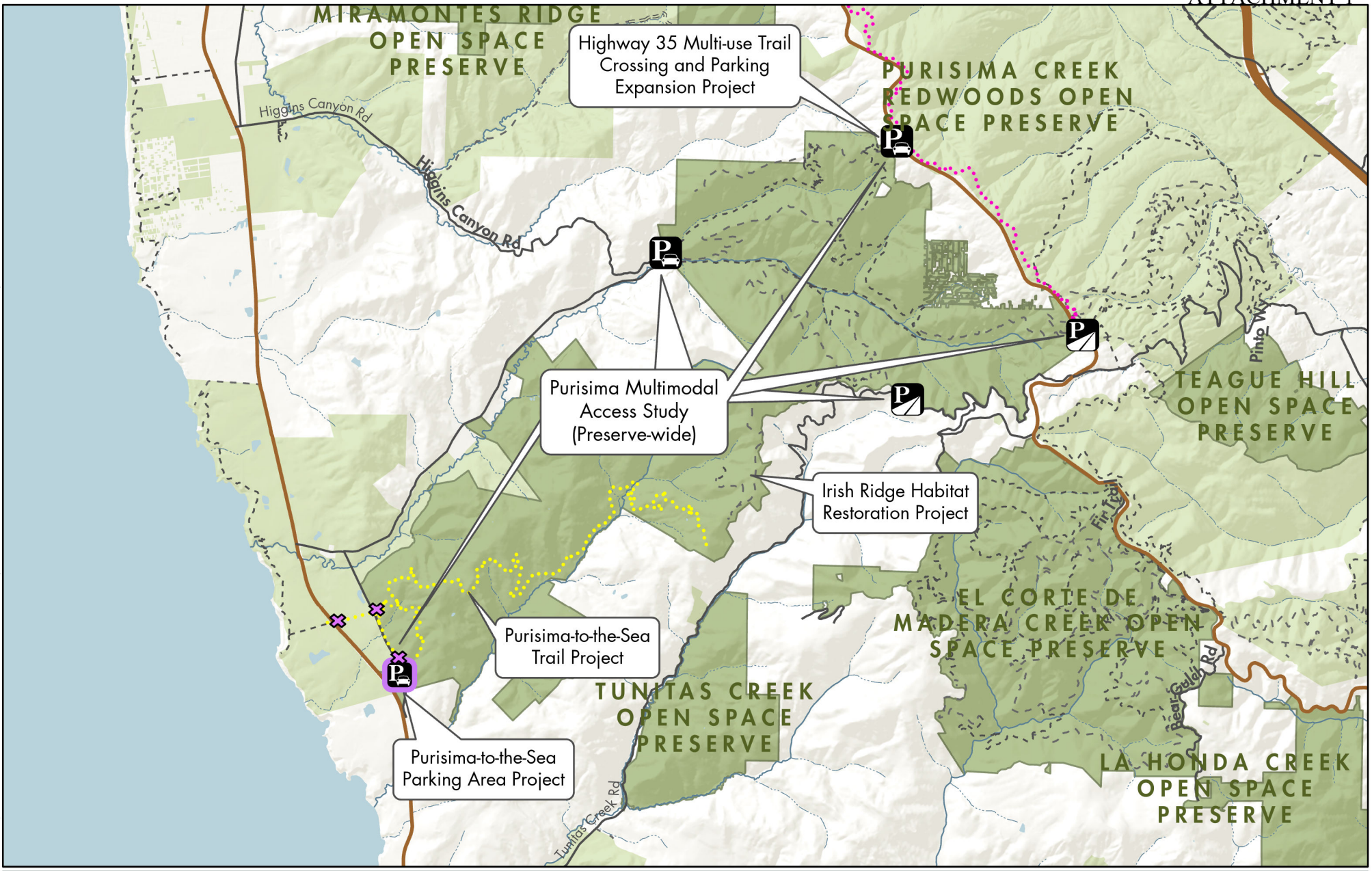
Gretchen Laustsen, Senior Planner, Planning Department

#### Graphics prepared by:

Brittany Wheatman, Planner II, Planning Department



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Created By: bwheatman



### Purisima Comprehensive Use and Management Plan Key Projects

- Midpen preserves
- Other protected lands
- Existing parking area
- Proposed parking area
- Proposed road crossing locations
- Proposed Bay Area Ridge Trail Extension
- Future Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
12/15/2023



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.