

# Portfolio 22

## Sierra Azul

### Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects



Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve by (Andrew Forster)

#### DESCRIPTION

- Develop multiuse trail and plan future trails as land is available.
- Develop parking.
- Restore plant communities and soils.
- Install trailside amenities.
- Preserve additional open space and complete wildlife corridor in upper Los Gatos Creek watershed.

Portfolio Allocation: \$6,714,000

Portfolio Expenditures Through 6/30/2023: \$1,478,708

#### NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

##### MAA22-001 Hendrys Creek Property Land Restoration

###### Prior Years

Completed removal of final bridge stream crossing. This is the last piece of Hendrys Creek Restoration project to remove unpermitted roads and structures to restore important creek habitat for wildlife and water quality.

Continued ongoing monitoring.

Coordinated with Valley Water on conservation easement held on the property, accomplished monitoring and reporting on the long-term management plan, which is a task to be done in perpetuity.

Met Valley Water grant requirements and secured \$269,116 through reimbursements on a \$484,650 grant to implement restoration plans at Hendrys Creek.

Removed culverts that impeded the creek and restored natural creek flow.

Completed annual monitoring and submitted annual report to Valley Water and CDFW, as required by the long-term management plan and CDFW permit conditions.

Received partnership funds to purchase the 117-acre Hendrys Creek property to protect wildlife corridors and watershed lands. No MAA funds were used on this purchase.

Completed fifth year of the coordinated monitoring effort to reduce mercury within the Guadalupe River watershed.

Completed first phase of invasive plant removal and developed a partnership with the San Jose Conservation Corps for the Hendrys Creek watershed restoration effort.

Negotiated with resource agencies, including CDFW, RWQCB and USACE to finalize permits to perform the Hendrys Creek restoration project. Rare opportunity to perform environmental restoration to benefit wildlife and water quality.

### **MAA22-003 Freudenberg Land Purchase**

#### **Prior Years**

Purchased the 24.41-acre Freudenberg property to protect wildlife and watershed lands.

### **MAA22-004 Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections**

#### **Prior Years**

Presented programming alternatives of parking and trailhead options for committee review and feedback in August 2020. Coordinated with partner agencies on project program elements and regulatory requirements. Provided board FYI in September 2020 to share committee feedback and project status. Presented project in January 2021 per board request. Also presented new information from citizen scientists about newt mortalities along the adjacent public county roadway (Alma Bridge Road). Given this new information and concerns about potentially further impacting the newt population, the committee recommended and the board concurred on directing staff to defer the parking and trail project until a newt mortality study is completed along the public roadway to inform next steps for the parking and trails project and to understand whether and if any site improvements could be made to the roadway to protect newts during their migrations.

Completed on-site field reconnaissance and preliminary assessment of the county's Miller Point parking lot. Met with stakeholders to develop scoping of studies regarding newts.

Held consultations with Santa Clara County Parks and Valley Water regarding proposed parking and trail development and permitting requirements.

Released RFPQ for consulting services to develop bridge design and evaluate the stability of the trail alignment.

Issued RFPs and selected consultants for site surveys, traffic, hazardous material assessments and environmental and biological services to support the implementation of the Beatty Parking Area.

Initiated traffic counts and line of sight analysis, Phase 1 environmental assessments and completed topographic surveys. Initiated conceptual parking area design.

Awarded a \$149,906 grant from Valley Water for the Beatty Trail connection project (grant income Included in FY20).

### **MAA22-005 Beatty House Site Security Improvements**

#### **Prior Years**

Procured and installed security fencing materials for public safety and to prevent potential vandalism/ trespassing of the unused structure.

Canceled the Beatty House Removal Project in response to board direction provided on March 24, 2021. Changed project scope to provide security fences around the structure; updated project name.

Retained consultant to conduct California Environmental Quality Act compliance process. Circulated Notice of Preparation to prepare an Environmental Impact Report in February 2021.

## MAA22-006 San Jose Water Company Lands

### Fiscal Year 2023

Closed escrow on the purchase of the 102.3-acre San Jose Water Company property within the upper Los Gatos Creek watershed, connecting protected open space and wildlife corridors within the Cathedral Oaks portion of Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve.

### In Support of MAA22

#### Fiscal Year 2023

Partnered with Santa Clara County Roads to hire wildlife crossing experts to explore wildlife crossing solutions to protect newt migration across Alma Bridge Road (public roadway) as part of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage project. The county prepared conceptual design options of roadway structures. Midpen applied for Wildlife Conservation Board funding to support the work.

#### Prior Years

Finalized and presented report on newt mortality demonstrating the need for developing a newt crossing across the county-owned road. Develop a cooperative agreement with the county and solicited a request for proposals and qualifications (RFPO) to begin design and recommend a CEQA approach for future capital project. The cooperative agreement with the county was approved in February.

Signed funding agreement with POST to conduct a newt mortality study along Alma Bridge Road given concerns about roadkill levels. POST provided oversight of a consultant who developed the field methodology for the newt study. With assistance from county parks staff, the study team completed installation of drift fence/pitfall traps. Midpen provided a traffic counter to get daily vehicle totals over the study period. County Parks recruited volunteers who assisted the consultant team to count newts in the traps and conduct road mortality surveys. Consultant tabulated and analyzed data and provided a draft report to document findings and determine if road mortality is impacting the resident population to inform next steps regarding newt protections along the roadway.

## PROJECT CHALLENGES

Permit monitoring for the Hendrys Creek Land Restoration project requires up to 10 years of tracking and reporting, which is cumulative for every project requiring a resource agency permit.

Newt studies and enhancements are critical to address prior to reinitiating work on the Beatty parking area and trail connections project. Implementation requires coordinating with multiple partners and stakeholders, especially Santa Clara County Roads and Airports Department.

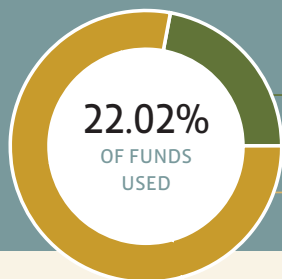
## POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS

MAA22-001: completed five years of monitoring to submit the year 5 mitigation monitoring report in December 2023 for the Hendrys Creek Land Restoration project. It is anticipated that the Project permit success criterion will be met by year 5 and the mitigation monitoring and reporting period will be completed. Annual monitoring and reporting is required in perpetuity under the long-term management agreement associated with the conservation easement with Valley Water.

In partnership with Santa Clara County, select a preferred alternative(s) for the newt crossing infrastructure (Alma Bridge Road Wildlife Passage Project) and begin CEQA review, more detailed design and permitting.

## Portfolio 22: Sierra Azul—Cathedral Oaks Public Access and Conservation Projects

Project	Expenditure Plan	Total Through Prior Period 6/30/22	Current Period 7/1/22 Through 6/30/23	Total Life-to-Date Through 6/30/23	Expenditure Plan Remaining	Percent Expended
Total Portfolio Allocation	\$6,714,000					
22-001—Hendrys Creek Property Land Restoration		\$513,343	\$0	\$513,343		
22-003—Freudenberg Land Purchase		\$540,587	\$0	\$540,587		
22-004—Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections		\$173,807	\$0	\$173,807		
22-005—Beatty House Site Security Improvements		\$47,855	\$640	\$48,495		
22-006—San Jose Water Lands		\$0	\$720,178	\$720,178		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$6,714,000</b>	<b>\$1,275,592</b>	<b>\$720,818</b>	<b>\$1,996,410</b>	<b>\$4,717,590</b>	<b>29.74%</b>
22-001—Hendrys Creek Property Land Restoration Grant Income		(\$336,228)	(\$181,474)	(\$517,702)		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$6,714,000</b>	<b>\$939,364</b>	<b>\$539,344</b>	<b>\$1,478,708</b>	<b>\$5,235,292</b>	<b>22.02%</b>



Total Life-to-Date Through 6/30/23  
**\$1,478,708**

Expenditure Plan Remaining  
**\$5,235,292**



Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (Christina Schell)