



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-15-65
April 14, 2015

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Bear Creek Stables Preliminary Site Design Alternatives Study Session

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Review and provide feedback on the preliminary site design alternatives and order of magnitude costs for proposed capital improvement projects at Bear Creek Stables.

SUMMARY

The Bear Creek Stables (Stables) Site Plan will guide the implementation of capital improvement projects, establishment of site management and improvement standards, development and operations of public access programs, and ongoing maintenance and operations of the Stables located at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Preserve). A focused Stables Site Plan is also needed prior to entering into a long-term lease with a tenant operator to ensure that Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (the District's) resource management and public access goals are met for the property. The purpose of this Agenda item is for the District's consultant to present the preliminary site design alternatives with order of magnitude costs and receive Committee member feedback and confirmation about the recommended next steps for finalizing the site design alternatives.

MEASURE AA

The Bear Creek Stables Site Plan serves to fulfill Measure AA Project #21-4.

BACKGROUND

In 2000, the District acquired a 260-acre property as an addition to Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (Preserve) that included an equestrian stables. The Preliminary Use and Management Plan for the property called for the continued operation of the stables, which has been operating on a month-to-month lease since 2000. The District is interested in entering into a long-term lease to facilitate tenant investment in long-term site improvements. Prior to executing a long-term lease, a Site Plan is needed that specifies the District's resource management and public access goals.

In December 2014, staff presented a proposed Stables Site Plan concept to the Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Committee (R-14-151). The Committee agreed in concept that the Site Plan should include a list of improvement standards, management standards, and capital improvement projects. The Committee also requested that the Site Plan include site design alternatives, public programs and access facilities, and scenarios for the shared financial investment of improvements between the future Stables long-term tenant and the District.

In February 2015, the Landscape Architect firm Populous was retained to develop three site design alternatives that would meet the following goals for Bear Creek Stables:

- 1) Emphasize the protection of the site's natural resources;
- 2) Maximize public benefits by broadening public access and use of the facility; and
- 3) Develop a viable plan that is financially feasible for both parties (tenant and District).

DISCUSSION

Planning and Outreach Process

The Stables site planning effort integrates existing conditions data and site analysis, case studies of other publicly-owned equestrian facilities, and diverse public input. This work has included extensive site observations, water quality testing of nearby creeks, and investigations of other public stables (e.g. Golden Gate National Recreation Area and East Bay Regional Park District). Results of these studies were presented to the PNR on August 2013. In March 2015, stakeholder feedback was solicited through two well-attended public meetings. Input and ideas on the future of Bear Creek Stables were recorded at the first open house. Preliminary design concepts that reflected some of this early input were then presented to the public at the second meeting for feedback.

Using the District's goals for the site as guiding principles, and incorporating the public input received on the design concepts, the consultants from Populous developed a range of site design alternatives with preliminary cost estimates. These site design alternatives will be presented to the PNR at a public meeting on April 14, 2015.

Concurrently, the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan is also underway as part of a separate planning process. Given the concurrent timelines, the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan and the Preserve Plan will inform each other to seamlessly integrate and connect the trails, parking areas, uses and stables facility.

Proposed Bear Creek Stables Site Plan Elements

The final Site Plan will include each of the following elements:

- Site Design
- Stables Improvement Standards
- Stables Management Guidelines
- Public Access Programs and Improvements
- Maintenance and Operations Projects

Preliminary Site Design Alternatives

Since the initial public outreach in March 2015, Populous has been preparing preliminary site design alternatives and associated preliminary costs that will be ready for presentation at the April 14, 2015 PNR Committee meeting. The alternatives aim to provide a range of options to achieve the project's goals.

The most basic and least cost design alternative includes the minimum improvements necessary to allow for the continued use of the site as a horse stable, including restoring areas impacted with heavy erosion, improving drainage, making efficient use of the site for boarding the maximum 72 allowable horses, and providing increased public access to the site. Subsequent alternatives build upon these essential improvements and allow for additional beneficial uses with the inclusion of different components such as a visitor center, arenas, livery stable, and/or restored barn.

The following are a list of key elements for each alternative:

Alternative A: Basic and least cost (essential improvements)

- Visitor information kiosk and visitor parking
- Public open air riding arena
- Pasture area fully restored to natural landscape
- Improved paddocks area for improved drainage and equestrian health and safety

Alternative B: Increased public and equestrian amenities – includes the essential improvements of Alternative A and the following components:

- Visitor/learning center (instead of a kiosk) and visitor parking
- Livery stable to facilitate public trail riding program
- Restoration/ reuse of existing barn for public meeting space
- Large public arena with bleacher seating

Alternative C: Increased public and equestrian amenities - includes the essential improvements of Alternative A and the following components:

- Visitor/learning center (instead of a kiosk) and visitor parking
- Public covered riding arena
- Restoration/reuse of existing barn for public meeting space
- Farm animals barn
- Improved and managed pastures for equestrian turnout areas

Stables Improvement Standards

Establishment of Stables improvement standards are necessary to improve the resource management and water quality at the site. Erosion will be reduced by eliminating access to and use of steep hillsides, installing vegetative filter strips in heavy use areas, renovating paddocks with roofs to direct water away from the enclosure, and lining each enclosure with base rock and rubber matting. These improvement standards will be finalized based on the site design alternative approved for the Stables.

Stables Management Guidelines

The following draft management guidelines will accompany a long-term lease for the stables to ensure a safe and healthy environment is provided for horses as well as a safe environment for equestrians and the general public visiting the site:

- Strive to maintain the maximum 72 horse capacity as stipulated in the Santa Clara County Use Permit.
- Implement a manure management program that establishes guidelines for the cleaning, storage, and composting of manure.

- Implement health, safety and emergency measures, including regular inspections by a qualified husbandry practitioner, presence of an onsite caretaker, storage/access to basic medical provisions and an emergency land line phone, and development of an emergency evacuation plan.

Public Access Programs and Improvements

To maximize public benefit of the site, a safe, welcoming and inclusive public access program will be implemented. Public access components may include designating public access areas as part of the Stables, installing a public welcome station with equestrian program brochures, interpretive information, and District standard signage, and offering public equestrian programs and horse boarding. In addition, public restrooms and visitor parking will be made available at the site. Future trail connections that would tie into the rest of the preserve's trail system will be evaluated as part of the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve Plan.

Maintenance and Operations Projects

Major maintenance and operations projects include the following:

- Implement road erosion treatment projects to improve access and reduce erosion.
- In order to confirm the availability of a reliable water source and evaluate additional water storage capacity, a water assessment will be conducted with a hydrologist. Water supply assessment would include evaluation of existing springs, ponds and other water sources for availability of reliable water and recommendations for additional capacity.

Funding Opportunities related to Public/Private Partnerships

As a publicly-owned facility that provides a community asset, the Bear Creek Stables site is envisioned to support both public access facilities and programs and private leased facilities. Prior to the implementation of the site plan and issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a future tenant, the assignment of financial responsibility will need to be determined between the future Stables long-term tenant and the District. Ample opportunities exist for public/private partnership funding at the Stables.

The District has entered into several public/private partnerships that have allowed for private uses of public lands in exchange for assistance with restoration or maintenance of structures, while maintaining opportunities for public access (e.g. Picchetti Winery, Fremont Older House). Agricultural leases are another example of public/private partnerships, where the District invests in grazing improvements (cattle fencing and water infrastructure) that may not be financially feasible for a tenant. The District's investment in conservation grazing provides, in exchange, significant benefits that align with the District's resource management goals including grassland management, fire protection, and habitat enhancement.

The equestrian facility at Bear Creek Stables supports a historical use at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve and provides benefits to the public and the equestrian community with current and future programs such as riding lessons, trail rides, or therapeutic riding programs. As the District proceeds to finalize design alternatives and development of the Site Plan, the District will need to evaluate the public benefit of the recommended improvements to this equestrian facility to determine the corresponding level of financial investment that can be made using public funds.

Staff is currently analyzing the District's policies related to public/private partnerships, revenue-producing uses, and property management of public lands. Staff will present these findings as

guidelines to assist with the assignment of financial responsibility between the future Stables long-term tenant and the District at a future PNR meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Planning Department's FY2015-16 Budget includes \$86,000 for completion of the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan and CEQA analysis. This project is included in the Board-adopted Five Year Measure AA Project List. Measure AA funding can be used to implement capital improvement projects at Bear Creek Stables that provide a public benefit. No direct fiscal impact would result from this Agenda Item. Future decisions on the scope and cost of capital improvements will result in a fiscal impact, and likely be funded using Measure AA funds. These financial implications will be presented at a future PNR meeting.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

Staff presented the planning process for developing a long-term plan and lease for Bear Creek Stables to the PNR Committee on August 27, 2013 and December 2, 2014. Since then, two additional PNR Committee meetings have been held to solicit initial input from the public on March 16 and 18, 2015.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Property owners of land located adjacent to or within 300 feet of Bear Creek Stables and interested parties have been mailed written notices of this Agenda item. Public notice was also provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

CEQA analysis would begin after the full Board of Directors approves the Stables Site Plan Project Description, which is scheduled for June 2015.

NEXT STEPS

The following are the next steps for the Stables Site Plan project:

Task	Date
Based on PNR Committee feedback, complete development of the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan	April - June 2015
PNR Committee considers recommending Board approval of Bear Creek Stables Site Plan	June 2, 2015
Board of Directors considers approval of the Site Plan as the CEQA Project Description for purposes of the environmental review	June 17, 2015
Conduct CEQA Review	Summer/Fall 2015
Board of Directors considers approval of the Site Plan, adoption of the CEQA Findings	Winter 2015

Attachment(s)

1. Bear Creek Stables Location Map

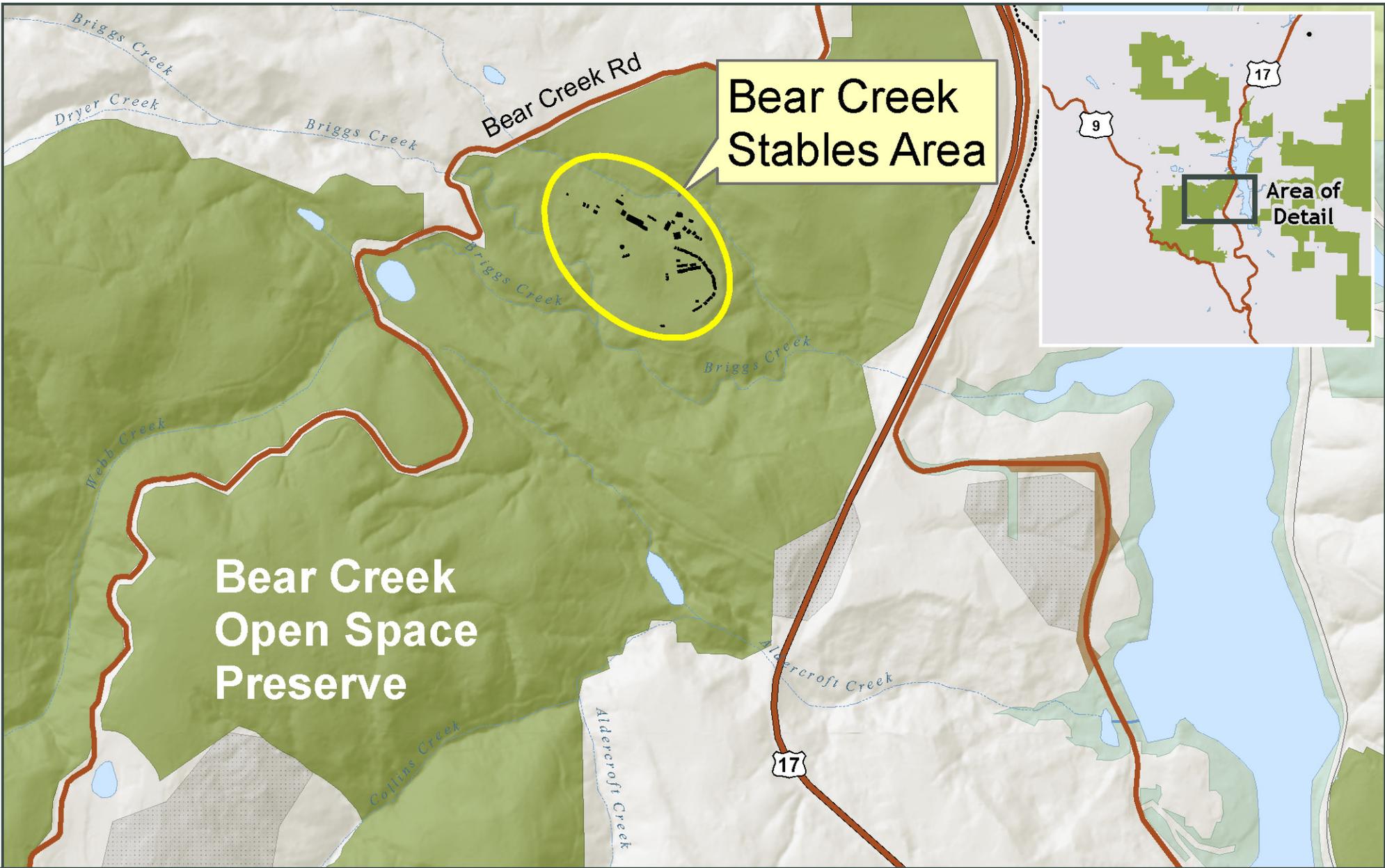
Responsible Department Head:
Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Manager

Prepared by:
Gretchen Laustsen, Planner II, Planning Department

Contact person:
Gretchen Laustsen, Planner II, Planning Department

Path: G:\Projects\Bear_Creek_Redwoods\Bear_Creek_Stables\Bear_Creek_Stables_Location_Map.mxd

Created By: chlatt



Attachment A: Bear Creek Stables Location Map

- | | |
|--|--|
|  MROSD Preserves |  Private Property |
|  Watershed Land |  Developed Land |

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(MROSD)



Miles 0 0.1 0.2

November, 2014

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