



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: September 12, 2018

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager *aruiz*

FROM: Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager
Brian Malone, Acting Assistant General Manager

SUBJECT: Agricultural Policy Project - Process and Schedule

SUMMARY

This memorandum provides the Board of Directors (Board) with a defined process and schedule to update the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) agricultural policies, which is a Fiscal Year 2018-19 Action Plan project. To ensure that policy development is well informed, the process includes four major phases of work, including two workshops, one study session, and one public hearing. The work would begin in November, with the hiring of the new Natural Resources Specialist/Rangeland Ecologist, and continue through October 2019. To maintain momentum and allocate the resources necessary to host multiple workshops (important new scope), three operational projects would be deferred or have the schedule extended. Moreover, updates made to the District's agricultural policies will serve to inform the subsequent work for two of these projects.

BACKGROUND

Clarifying and further defining and the District's role in agricultural preservation, consistent with the San Mateo Coastal Service Plan, is a component of the work program for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The proposed project scope of work includes compiling and reviewing existing agricultural policies, guidelines, and current practices. This step is particularly important since Board-adopted agricultural policies exist in numerous documents (Basic Policy, Resource Management Policies, Coastal Service Plan, etc.) with the potential for inconsistencies and/or conflicts. This work will also evaluate gaps and areas requiring greater clarification, such as understanding the District's role in the provision of Agricultural Workforce Housing. The goal is to arrive at a comprehensive Board-approved agricultural policy to inform future work.

The updated Agricultural Policy may include or touch on the following topics:

- Agricultural production plans
- Agricultural workforce housing
- Agricultural infrastructure
- Water supply and use
- Pesticide use
- Predation and pest management

- Brush management
- Balance with resource protection
- Invasive species management
- Compatible public access
- Riparian and aquatic habitat protection
- Marketing and promotion
- Use of conservation easements and fee title
- Types of uses permitted (e.g. grazing, row crops, small livestock and poultry, greenhouses, processing plants, cannabis, vineyards, tree farms, horse breeding, dairy, native plant harvesting, orchards, apiaries, farm dinners, tours, environmental education etc.)

Some topics are addressed in sufficient detail within existing policies. Other topics would benefit from additional policy development to better define Board direction and the District’s role. In the course of evaluating all of the facets that apply to agricultural preservation, the Board may request the inclusion of additional topics.

As a reminder, the mission for the Coastal Protection Area (established in the 2004 Coastal Annexation Area Service Plan) is as follows (**bold** denotes additions to the District’s basic Mission Statement):

“To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land **and agricultural land of regional significance**, protect and restore the natural environment, **preserve rural character**, **encourage viable agricultural use of land resources**, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. **The District will accomplish this mission as a cooperative endeavor with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals with similar goals.**”

POLICY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH AND TIMELINE

To best provide the Board with a full understanding of the elements of an agricultural policy, the General Manager is preparing to pursue a phased approach starting with a review of all pertinent District policies, guidelines, and practices as follows:

1) Review Existing Agricultural Policies, Guidelines, and Practices

The San Mateo Coastal Area Service Plan and subsequent EIR establishes the policies, guidelines, and practices by which the District purchases and manages lands in the San Mateo County coastside area, including agricultural lands. The Basic Policy, Resource Management Policies, property management policies, and various other board and administrative policies provide staff direction on agricultural uses, leases, and easements. A review of these and other existing agricultural policies will establish a good framework from which to move onto the next phase of policy development -- to host an agricultural workshop of the San Mateo Coast.

Timeline:

- November 2018 – December 2018
- Board Study Session: January 2018

Potential Attendees:

- Grazing/row crop/chestnut farm/tree farm tenants
- Other interested members of the public

Desired Outcomes:

- Understand current agricultural goals, vision, expectations, emphasis, gaps, inconsistencies, and conflicts on District lands
- Inform the Board about the acreage and types of agricultural uses on District lands
- Understand natural resource management policies, guidelines, and practices that support and affect agricultural uses
- Receive early Board feedback on topics and gaps to address as part of this agricultural policy work

2) *San Mateo Coast Agricultural Workshop*

Supervisor Don Horsley of San Mateo County is a local leader in agricultural preservation, and has modeled an engagement strategy with the coastside community through hosting agricultural workshops in 2012 (San Mateo County Agricultural Summit on November 29) and 2014 (Water Supply Reliability on December 5). There may be an opportunity to co-host an Agricultural Workshop with San Mateo County to understand the priority issues and concerns of a wide breadth of local agricultural producers to receive the full range of viewpoints (conventional, organic, grazing, row crops, tree farms, vineyards, etc.). Topics may include farm labor housing, infrastructure, predation, public access, and water use. If time allows, the workshop may include site tour(s) of working lands.

Timeline:

- Preparation: January 2019 - March 2019
- Workshop: March 2019

Potential Attendees:

- Grazing/row crop/chestnut farm/tree farm tenants
- Conventional farmers/ranchers
- Organic farmers/ranchers
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- San Mateo County Farm Bureau
- San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner

Desired Outcomes:

- Identify main issues facing agricultural producers on the San Mateo Coast and Peninsula, from conventional to organic
- Understand the benefits and challenges agricultural producers face with the programs and practices offered or required by the District and other partners, agencies, non-profits
- Strengthen connections between the District and local agricultural producers
- Identify desired elements for the agricultural policy

3) *Partner Agency Workshop*

Following the Agricultural Workshop, the District would hold a focused workshop with partner agencies and organizations to discuss their roles and responsibilities in helping to preserve and sustain agriculture. As part of this workshop, the Board would gain insights in the current programs offered and practices implemented by partner agencies; the successes, challenges, and lessons learned using case studies; and the gaps or deficiencies that are present within the District's jurisdiction where the District may consider playing a greater role. Topics may include the balance of natural resources protection with sustainable agriculture; land management costs

and benefits; public outreach and education; and the management of conventional and organic practices on protected open space lands. If time allows, the workshop may include site tour(s) of partner-managed working lands.

Timeline:

- Preparation: April 2019 – June 2019
- Workshop: June 2019

Potential Attendees:

- Peninsula Open Space Trust
- San Mateo County Resource Conservation District
- Coastside Land Trust
- TomKat Ranch Education Foundation
- San Mateo County Planning - Local Coastal Program
- Sonoma Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Point Blue Conservation Science
- Santa Lucia Conservancy
- Pepperwood Foundation
- Sonoma Mountain Institute
- California State Parks

Desired Outcomes:

- Share best practices and lessons learned
- Strengthen connections with partners and organizations that support agriculture
- Identify programs and practices that are most beneficial to agricultural producers and protective of natural resource values
- Identify desired elements for the agricultural policy

4) *District Agricultural Policy, Guidelines, Practices:*

Information, feedback, and Board direction received at each workshop would be used to either update existing policies, guidelines and practices, or develop a new comprehensive set of policies as necessary, which the Board would review at a study session and approve at a subsequent Board meeting.

Timeline:

- July 2019 – October 2019
- Board Study Session of proposed new policy language: September 2019
- Board approval of new policy language: October 2019

ADJUSTMENTS TO FY2018-19 OPERATING PROJECTS

To accomplish the agricultural policy update as detailed in this memo and accommodate the expanded project scope, adjustments to the following three operating projects for FY2018-19 are necessary. Moreover, updates made to the District’s agricultural policies will inform the work of the first two listed items below.

Project		Notes	Department
Evaluate District’s Role in Offsite	Deferral	Updates to the agricultural policy will inform the	Land and Facilities

Agricultural Workforce Housing		District's role in supporting offsite agricultural workforce housing.	
Basic Policy Update for the Coastal Area	Deferral	Updates to the agricultural policy will inform updates to the Basic Policy for the Coastal Area.	Planning
Prescribed Fire Program Development	Extension of Schedule	Depending on staff capacity, the project schedule may need to be extended.	Natural Resources

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