



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-18-140
Meeting 18-40
November 28, 2018

AGENDA ITEM 9

AGENDA ITEM

Preserve Use Survey – Proposed Follow-up Implementation Actions

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Receive a presentation and provide input on the proposed implementation actions to address the recommendations derived from the 2017-18 Preserve Use Survey. No formal Board action required.

SUMMARY

On March 14 and May 9, 2018, San Francisco State University (SFSU) researcher, Professor Patrick Tierney, presented to the Board of Directors (Board) the results of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Preserve Use Survey Project. The project gathered data from almost 1500 Preserve visitors via intercept surveys, as well as from numerous participants in seven focus groups. The intercept survey collected information on general preserve visitor experiences and suggestions for improvements. The results indicate an overwhelming (98%) visitor approval of District preserves. Of the few issues raised, the most common included a lack of parking, dog waste on trails, and the availability and upkeep of restroom facilities.

Focus groups provided input from demographics that either historically do not use District preserves or are of growing significance in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. These groups encounter barriers, some quite fundamental like transportation, which preclude them from accessing the preserves. In some cases, a lack of awareness or knowledge of the District also prevented them from considering an outing.

To proceed with next steps on using the Preserve Use Study data to inform District operations, staff have developed proposed implementation actions for each key finding. On November 28, 2018, the Board will review and provide feedback on the proposed implementation actions. Staff will finalize the list with Board input and incorporate the final implementation actions in future Action Plans and Budgets.

DISCUSSION

The Fiscal Year 2017-18 Action Plan included the Preserve Use Survey Project to learn more about the people who currently use District preserves, their preferences, and suggested improvements. The total project cost, which included a research contract with San Francisco State University (SFSU), temporary survey staff, and survey equipment, amounted to approximately \$97,000. SFSU has conducted several similar surveys across the Bay Area,

including for San Mateo County Parks, Marin County Parks, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Early in the Project, staff consulted with the Board's Diversity Ad Hoc Committee to refine the approach, goals, and objectives. The Project was divided into two phases: Phase 1) Trailhead intercept surveys of visitors exiting the preserves, and Phase 2) Focus group discussions with residents who represent important demographics of underserved communities and growing populations within the District. Refer to Attachment 1 for an overview of the Project scope and timelines.

Project Details

Below is a summary of the goals, objectives and results of the Preserve Use Survey Project:

Project Goals: Conduct a scientifically-valid representative survey and collect baseline data on visitors and non-visitors to understand who and why people visit Preserves, their preferences, areas of potential improvement, and also understand the barriers and challenges that keep others from visiting or being aware of their local public open space lands.

Project Objectives:

- Gather and analyze information on preserve visitor characteristics, trip purpose, and planning;
- Understand the preserve visitor experience;
- Determine visitor desires and preferences regarding preserve themes, experiences, facilities, and resources;
- Count and estimate total number of visitors to preserves;
- Gather and analyze data on resident nonusers and underserved communities;
- Identify key barriers to visitation and strategies for increasing use of preserves by nonusers and underserved residents; and
- Understand visitor and non-visitor attitudes towards stewardship of preserves.

Results:

The results of both the intercept surveys and focus groups weighed in on a variety of topics. Table 1 below provides a summary of the key findings made by the SFSU researcher based on the respondent feedback.

Note: To provide additional context when considering how to address the results of the Preserve Use Survey Project, it is important to acknowledge that an overwhelming 98% of intercept survey respondents rated their experiences as either good or very good. The focus groups, which comprised of assembled community members ranging from four to fifteen participants in each group, identified systematic barriers that they encountered to accessing District preserves or factors that influenced their ability to enjoy their experience. Though the group size is small relative to their overall demographic population, their responses provide insight into their group's respective thoughts and experiences.

Table 1: Preserve Use Survey Results and Recommended Areas of Focus:

Priority	FOCUS GROUP	INTERCEPT SURVEY
1	More outreach to their community	Do not have any high priority issues of concern
2	More restrooms	Expand parking near site
3	Address personal safety concerns: Docent-led tours, organized groups to visit within their community, and provide hiking partners	Reduce dog waste and bags along trail
4	Create a trail rating system, post trail difficulty on web	Limit speeding bikes on trails
5	Identify and post easy, short, loop trails	Reduce number of visitors at certain sites
6	Expand transportation (public and private) to preserves	Minimize horse waste impacts on trails
7	Use more social media and communications technology	Restrict dogs to on-leash
8	More family, kids and women programs/activities	More info on plants, animals
9	More and better directional signage	Reduce trash/litter at trails and parking
10	More natural/historical resources info	More frequent cleaning of restrooms

Recommended Implementation Actions:

To proceed with next steps on using the Preserve Use Survey Study to inform District activities, staff has developed a list of recommended implementations actions to address the key findings identified by Professor Tierney. The recommended implementation actions are provided in Attachment 2 for Board review and input. Key findings include one or multiple implementation actions and are grouped by overarching themes and sorted by data source (whether the finding came from the intercept surveys or focus groups) and level of priority.

The General Manager proposes to initiate the proposed implementation actions over the next three fiscal years, beginning with the first set of actions in Fiscal Year 2019-20. Progress made would be tracked and reported to the Board on an annual basis as part of the Year End Review to keep the Board apprised on the accomplished work.

FISCAL IMPACT

Receipt of the information will not result in a fiscal impact. Implementation of future actions to enhance outreach and address visitation barriers and areas of concern may result in a fiscal impact, which the Board would consider as part of the annual Action Plan and Budget.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item was not previously reviewed by a Board Committee.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

The General Manager proposes to initiate the implementation actions over the next three fiscal years. Progress made will be tracked and reported to the Board on an annual basis as part of the Year End Review. The Preserve Use Survey would repeat every 5 to 10 years to keep the data fresh, recognize patterns of change, and confirm the effectiveness of the District in addressing gaps and barriers, and achieving its goals.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Preserve Use Survey Project Timeline
2. Preserve Use Survey - Recommended Follow-up Implementation Actions

Responsible Department Head:
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Prepared by:
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Attachment 1

MROSD Preserve Use Survey Project Scope and Timeline:

Date	Activity
July 2017	Survey goal and timeline definition
August 2017	Survey setup and temporary staff recruitment
September – November 2017	Intercept survey data collection and final report
November 2017 – April 2018	Conduct focus groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors (San Mateo & Santa Clara County) • Youth • South Asian (Indian) • East Asian (Chinese) • Latino (East Palo Alto and Pescadero)
March 2018	Board presentation of Phase 1, intercept survey results
May 9, 2018	Board presentation of Phase 2, focus group results
May – June 2018	Applicable departments review findings and identify opportunities to improve Midpen outreach, projects, programs, and facilities, along with identifying open questions
July – August 2018	Departments research and answer open questions and formulate recommendations on specific findings
October 2018	Board Study Session to review opportunities for addressing visitation, outreach, and engagement gaps, receive responses to prior Board questions, and provide any additional direction
November 2018 and beyond	Departments work on immediate actions and integrate long-term actions into future budget cycles.

Focus Groups:

Between October 2017 and April 2018, seven focus groups were conducted by SFSU in both San Mateo and Santa Clara County. With each focus group, SFSU partnered with a local organization or individuals identified by Midpen staff to assist with participant recruitment:

Date	Demographic	Location	Partner
October 2017	South Asian (Indian)	Cupertino	Travel Backyard
January 2018	Latino	East Palo Alto	Nuestra Casa
January 2018	Youth	San Carlos	Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)
March 2018	Seniors	Redwood City	San Mateo County Senior Commission
March 2018	East Asian (Chinese)	Cupertino	Cupertino Sustainability Commission
April 2018	Latino	Pescadero	Puente de la Costa Sur
April 2018	Seniors	Palo Alto	Avenidas

Attachment 2

Preserve Use Survey – Recommended Follow-up Implementation Actions

Contextual Notes:

- Intercept Survey:** Overall satisfaction from Survey respondents expressed overwhelming overall satisfaction with District preserves with 98% of preserve users registering either a “Good” or “Very Good” experience. Over 96% of respondents indicated they felt safe or very safe during their visit.
- Focus Groups:** Focus groups, which comprised of assembled community members ranging from four to fifteen participants, identified systematic barriers that they encountered to accessing District preserves or factors that influenced their ability to enjoy their experience. Though the group size is small relative to their overall demographics’ population, their responses provide insight into their group’s respective thoughts and experiences.

Category	SFSU recommendations based on Preserve Use Survey findings	Source	Survey Source Priority	Recommended Follow-Up Implementation Actions
Access and Accessibility	Easier, shorter, loop trails	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to ADA Transition Plan, which identifies the promotion of easy access trail information. When feasible and appropriate, identify additional “easy access” trails near trailheads and entry points during preserve and trail planning efforts
	More trails for wheelchairs	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to ADA Transition Plan, which identifies the promotion of wheelchair-accessible trail information. When feasible and appropriate, identify additional ADA/wheelchair-accessible trail opportunities that connect to ADA/wheelchair-accessible facilities and entry points during preserve and trail planning efforts
	More camping opportunities	Focus Group	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partner agencies that offer overnight camping (i.e. Santa Clara County Parks, San Mateo County Parks, State Parks) to provide the public with information about where they can camp and how District trails can facilitate connections. Consistent with Vision Plan Priority Action #24, partner with other agencies and/or entities, including Santa Clara County Parks, to explore and/or expand family camping opportunities at or near the Rancho de Guadalupe area of Sierra Azul.

Attachment 2

Communication	More outreach to underserved communities	Focus Group	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate current community outreach events and identify new methods and/or additional events for expanding outreach effectiveness to underserved audiences. Identify and implement new distribution points for bilingual materials. Pilot new partnerships with two to three underserved, hard-to-reach community groups.
	More social media, Facebook	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop social media and targeted marketing campaigns to increase followers in underserved communities and new user groups.
	Use advanced communications technology and applications	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FY2018-19 Action Plan includes development of an interactive web map for public use; develop a promotional campaign to inform the public about the availability of the web map and curated content through several existing mobile/computer applications.
	Multi-lingual signs and brochures	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand trail junction numbering system (currently piloting at lower La Honda Creek) to other preserve(s). Evaluate options to include multi-lingual key words or information at trailheads, on the website, and in District material, and implement accordingly.
Interpretation	More nature/history info	Focus Group	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recent Board-approved position in the Interpretation and Environmental Education program will enhance and expand the District’s public environmental education programs; recruitment is scheduled for early 2019.
	Trail rating system, difficulty on website	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop standards for a new District trail rating system. Develop trail profile data. Evaluate trailhead maps, signage, brochures, and/or web tools to determine best methods for posting trail rating and trail profile data, and implement accordingly Related to ADA Transition Plan, which identifies the marketing and communication of trail information.

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	Web cams of animals	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop system to transmit trail camera images and other high-impact visual information to Public Affairs for inclusion in communications material, web, and social media.
	More information on preserve's plants, animals	Intercept Survey	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recent Board-approved position in the Interpretation and Environmental Education program will enhance and expand the District's public environmental education programs; recruitment is scheduled for early 2019. The recent Docent and Volunteer Programs Study recommends new Preserve Interpretation Master Plans that identify preserve-specific flora and fauna to highlight as part of docent led hikes and other educational programs, materials, and events. Evaluate to determine suitability and to identify a pilot preserve, if deemed timely and appropriate. Investigate alternative technologies and applications to highlight plant and animal species within specific preserves.
Maintenance	More, cleaner restrooms	Focus Group	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a long-range plan to identify new areas in need of restroom facilities and/or replacement of older restrooms. Continue to regularly check and clean restrooms.
	Reduce dog waste and bags along trail	Intercept Survey	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to communicate and educate visitors on "carry in & carry out" policy and relevant District ordinances. Continue to enforce existing regulations, which require cleanup of dog waste. Identify strategies for expanded and targeted outreach and education of District policies, implement accordingly. Develop and implement an escalating response plan to enhance compliance. If compliance remains poor, evaluate the operational and fiscal impacts of dog waste stations at high priority sites for Board consideration.
	Reduce trash/litter at trails/parking	Intercept Survey	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to pick up litter during routine maintenance activities. If and where littering is deemed a significant problem, implement a coordinated and targeted campaign to reinforce "No Littering". When littering is observed, use opportunity to educate the public of the resource impacts and importance of keeping natural areas trash-free.

Attachment 2

	More frequent cleaning of restrooms	Intercept Survey	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to regularly check and clean restroom at high use preserves twice daily. As capacity and workload allows, increase servicing/cleaning of portable rented toilets to three times per week.
Programming	More programs for families, kids and women	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue existing public programs and evaluate opportunities for additional programs targeted to families, kids, and women. Develop targeted communications and marketing around existing programs.
	Docent led hikes	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recent Board-approved position in the Interpretation and Environmental Education program will enhance and expand the District's public environmental education programs; recruitment is scheduled for early 2019. In addition, the Docent and Volunteer Programs Study recommends future new positions to expand docent/interpretive programs for the public.
	Partnerships with schools	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A recent Board-approved position to in the Interpretation and Environmental Education program will enhance and expand the District's public environmental education programs, including partnerships with schools; recruitment is scheduled for early 2019. The District's Youth Outreach Program will include new and enhanced pilot partnerships to reach and engage youth, and encourage them to learn about and explore open space.
Safety	Perceived personal safety concerns	Focus Group	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule periodic, introductory activities for new preserve users to introduce new visitors to outdoor recreation in open space. Develop and disseminate "Introduction to Open Space" materials to familiarize new visitors with how to use open space preserves.
	More and better signage	Focus Group	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilot preserves for evaluating and implementing improved preserve signage, including trail junction numbering.

Attachment 2

	Limit speeding bikes on trails	Intercept Survey	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to enforce existing regulations, including 15 MPH speed limit, 5 MPH when passing. • If speeding issues are of major concern, staff informational outreach/education tables in popular mountain biking areas and/or increase enforcement presence, including support of the Volunteer Trail Patrol.
Trail Use	Reduce overcrowded trail experiences at Rancho San Antonio and St. Joseph’s Hill	Intercept Survey	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand promotion of lesser-visited preserves. • Proceed with Rancho San Antonio Multi-Model Access Project and begin implementing strategies and improvements to reduce parking demands (overcrowding concerns likely related to parking conflicts). Consider implementing similar strategies and improvements at St. Joseph’s Hill, as appropriate. • Reassess visitation as new areas are open for public use to determine if use is distributed (e.g. opening of Bear Creek Redwoods).
	Allow more dog walking	Focus Group	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communications/marketing of existing dog use areas. • Utilize the District’s Dog Use Suitability Criteria to determine if additional areas are suitable for dog access.
	Minimize horse waste impacts on trails	Intercept Survey	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor situation. No recommendation at this time.
	Restrict dogs to on-leash	Intercept Survey	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue active enforcement of leash regulations. • Continue to educate the public of on-leash regulations.
Transportation & Parking	Public transportation to preserves	Focus Group	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research other agencies' best management practices. Coordinate with communities and transit agencies, private and non-profits, for ride-share solutions and opportunities. • Outreach to underserved communities about available access options to open space preserves. • Incorporate transportation, as appropriate, as part of organized, group-focused public programming.

Attachment 2

	Expand parking near site	Intercept Survey	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The FY18-19 Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP) and Budget includes a number of parking studies: (a) Rancho San Antonio Multimodal Access Study, (b) La Honda Creek Parking Feasibility Study to evaluate parking solutions.• Evaluate existing parking utilization with additional visitor counts at high use sites that have parking constraints to inform next steps.
	Improve parking at Rancho San Antonio	Focus Group	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proceed with Rancho San Antonio Multi-Model Access Project and begin implementing strategies and improvements to reduce parking demands, thereby improving parking conditions at the preserve.