



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

**MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Administrative Office
330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, CA 94022

**Monday, October 28, 2019
1:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

Director Cyr called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at to order at 1:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr and Karen Holman

Members Absent: Yoriko Kishimoto

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, Senior Resources Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Shani Kleinhaus provided comments regarding the draft grazing management policy recently heard by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee stating grazing can have negative impacts on nearby ecosystems.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

VOTE: 2-0-0 (Director Kishimoto absent)

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Wildland Fire Resiliency Program – Vegetation Management Plan (R-19-141)

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided introductory comments reporting on the impact of climate change on the frequency and impact of wildfires on open space and nearby communities and increased greenhouse gas emissions. The Wildland Fire Resiliency Program results from numerous public meetings, consultation with other agencies and partners, and scientific research.

Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter presented the staff report describing the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program components and its objectives and goals, including resource protection and enhancement, public safety and education, prioritized treatment, etc. The Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) focuses on ecosystem resiliency, which addresses fuel reduction, and public safety, which includes fuelbreaks, defensible space, emergency staging areas, and grazing management. Staff and District consultants developed criteria for prioritizing vegetation management areas. Finally, Mr. Sifuentes-Winter outlined the next steps for the project and proposed timeline, which currently will allow for vegetation management implementation prior in late 2020.

Director Holman requested clarification regarding the 300-foot buffer for pesticide use near waterways and suggested including additional explanatory language in the Board report.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter explained a 300-foot buffer is required around all streams, ponds, creeks, and other waterways for mixing, loading, and/or storing pesticides.

Director Holman inquired regarding fuelbreaks maintained by others, such as maintaining vegetation near power lines by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E).

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter reported staff is considering entering into a memorandum of understanding with PG&E regarding this maintenance to provide continuity of regulations.

General Counsel Hilary Stevenson reported PG&E holds the responsibility for clearing vegetation when needed and the associated liability if the areas are not cleared.

Director Holman spoke in favor of ensuring consistency between the VMP and the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program especially relating to use of pesticides and suggested including the IPM Manual with the Board report.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter confirmed the District does not engage in broadcast spraying of pesticides and targets specific plants with spot spraying.

Public comments opened at 2:30 p.m.

K spoke in favor of staying engaged with PG&E regarding their work. K spoke against the use of glyphosate/Roundup and requested the District not sell any material that is removed, such as trees or bushes.

Gigi Salem spoke regarding her property near Arnich Road, which has a large amount of vegetation in the area and spoke in favor the District clearing the vegetation.

Stanford Stickney spoke regarding dry vegetation near El Sereno Open Space Preserve and the Town of Los Gatos. Mr. Stickney spoke in favor of using proscribed burns to clear the land and protect wildlife and residents.

Dyer Stickney spoke in favor of maintaining a minimum fire protection line to safeguard against wildfires.

Shani Kleinhaus spoke regarding the causes of wildfires by people and infrastructure. Ms. Kleinhaus spoke in favor of removing infrastructure from areas vulnerable to wildfires. Also new infrastructure and homes should be restricted and kept away from areas vulnerable to wildfire.

Della Flint inquired regarding firefighting vehicles in the area. Ms. Flint also inquired regarding dead oak leaves and cuttings on District land and frequency of assessing vegetation growth in PG&E easements and asked the District to provide access to the assessment schedule.

Kathy Simpson, resident near Coal Creek Open Space Preserve, spoke regarding the need for Caltrans to maintain dry grass areas to protect against wildfire.

B. Venkatesh inquired why PG&E uses overhead cables instead of underground wires and spoke in favor of undergrounding cables. Mr. Venkatesh also spoke regarding vegetation clearance along the hillsides and this leading to potential landslides during the winter.

Mark Matousek, District neighbor, spoke regarding a lack of access along Bolman and Montevina Roads through El Sereno Open Space Preserve for evacuation routes leading to decreased ability to insure homes against fire.

Anne Dunham spoke in favor of residents having gate keys to allow residents through the District's gates as an evacuation route.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter described the District's Integrated Pest Management program, which seeks to reduce the use of glyphosate in its preserves and explained the limited reasons the District uses glyphosate, such as preventing ground erosion, reduce human impact, etc. In the last year herbicide use dropped from 10% to 2% in District preserves, due to implementation of additional best management practices. Pesticides are used when it is needed to prevent erosion due to ground disturbance, target specific species prone to regrowth, and treat poisonous/hazardous plants.

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone invited preserve neighbors to contact the District regarding any concerns related to vegetation clearance along or near District lands. Mr. Malone reported that when there are private road easements through District lands, the responsibility for clearing the land is with the holder of the easement either fully or in proportion with their use.

Mr. Malone reported assessments are completed for PG&E easements on an annual basis, and PG&E has complete responsibility to maintain the areas in their easements.

Mr. Malone reported vegetation is cleared along Montevina Road through District lands so it may be maintained as an escape route, but there are other private properties in the area that may block escape routes.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter reported the District does work with PG&E to remove and underground infrastructure.

Public comments closed at 3:08 p.m.

Director Holman inquired if the District can work with Caltrans regarding vegetation and litter clearance.

Mr. Malone reported District staff have engaged and worked with elected officials, agency staff, and Caltrans numerous times to address vegetation and litter clearance and install no-smoking signs along their rights-of-way to reduce fire danger.

Director Holman suggested that 4.5.2 be altered to state the General Manager will review the report and the Board of Directors will accept the informational report on an annual basis.

Director Holman spoke in favor of using electric or battery powered tools over gas powered tools to reduce fire danger when clearing vegetation and in favor of expanding the amount of areas that use no pesticides.

Director Holman inquired regarding protection of bird species during District activities to thin vegetation, such as leaving vegetation bridges for the wildlife.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter reported he recently presented to the Sierra Club and Audubon Society and has discussed concerns related to vegetation bridges because this may impair the District's ability to reduce wildfire risk. Staff continues to work on implementation options to address this concern such as wildlife bridges through riparian areas.

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to forward the proposed Vegetation Management Plan to the full Board of Directors for consideration of approval with any changes requested by the Committee.

VOTE: 2-0-0 (Director Kishimoto absent)

ADJOURNMENT

Director Cyr adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 3:34 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk