




Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

# Memorandum

DATE: June 10, 2020

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager 

FROM: Aaron Hébert, Senior Resource Management Specialist

SUBJECT: Allocation of Water Rights Affecting the Gordon Ridge Ranch Purchase

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## SUMMARY

The Gordon Ridge Property and its associated water rights are subject to the San Gregorio watershed water rights Decree, which is a court order that memorializes how historical water rights will be used by land owners beginning in 1993. The Decree identifies the point of diversion (POD), place of use, and type of use for each authorized water user. One of the water rights identified in the Decree as Point of Diversion number 225(2) serves three parcels of land once owned by a single water user recognized in the Decree. The three parcels are now known as : 1) “Gordon Ridge Ranch”, 2) “Gordon Ridge Farm A”, both of which the District is acquiring, and 3) a property called “Rising Acres,” which Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) owns and may sell or lease to a private party in the future (see Attachment 1). In order to clarify the allocation of water from POD 225(2) among these parcels, POST and the District have negotiated a “Water Allocation Agreement” to memorialize how to allocate future diversions among separate owners in a manner consistent with the Decree (as seen in Table 1).

It is important to note that POD 225(2) does not currently provide water to Gordon Ridge Ranch, because no water pipeline exists to serve this parcel. There is no current demand for creek water there, because several springs and a pond on the Gordon Ridge Ranch property (not part of the Decree) serve its water needs.

Gordon Ridge Ranch has grazing and domestic uses, and therefore was allotted half of the stockwater and all of the incidental domestic water. Gordon Ridge Farm A is exclusively used for row crops. Due to its small size, it is allotted a smaller percentage of the irrigation water. Rising Acres currently has domestic and irrigation uses and may have stockwatering needs in the future, depending on future agricultural operations, is therefore was allocated half of the stockwater and the majority of the irrigation water.

**Table 1. Allotment of POD225(2) among parcels**

<b>Parcel</b>	<b>Irrigation Allotment</b>	<b>Stockwater Allotment</b>	<b>Incidental Domestic or Winter Stockwater (Nov 1 – Apr 1)</b>
Gordon Ridge Ranch 081-040-010	15%	50%	100%
Gordon Ridge Farm A 081-022-010	10%	0	0
Rising Acres 081-250-010	75%	50%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1993, the Decree allocated water for domestic uses, crop irrigation, and stock watering on grazing lands, based on estimates of prior use. The water allotments exceeded actual demand in some cases (e.g. provided more irrigation water than crops require) and did not provide enough in others (e.g. a need for more domestic water). The Decree also established a priority system in the event of a drought: domestic use first, irrigation and stock water second.

A court-appointed watermaster administers the Decree by monitoring uses on a monthly basis to enforce the limits of the Decree. In recent years, the watermaster has determined that the water was over-allocated, and that insufficient water was available in late summer for diversion. In this situation, the watermaster sent curtailment notices to second-priority users, such as irrigators and ranchers, directing them to reduce diversion to every other day rather than daily. The curtailments have been ordered every year since the 2012 drought. Drought affects in-stream flows for salmonids and other aquatic species, particularly in the late summer and fall periods as flows naturally decrease. In recent years, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District and Trout Unlimited have worked with farmers to decrease the amount of water diverted in the late summer and fall, principally by increasing irrigation efficiency and constructing large off-stream water storage reservoirs that supply water during low flow months, in lieu of direct stream diversion. Trout Unlimited has worked with these farmers to “dedicate” the water saved by these measures to environmental purposes (i.e. to both leave the actual water in the creek as well as to record a change to the water right, protecting that water from downstream diversion). Water rights in San Gregorio can be used to protect the environment, be sold or transferred to other users, affect the appraised property value, and provide for current or future operational needs.

## **DISCUSSION**

The primary value of the water rights associated with POD 225(2) to the District are that they provide flexibility for future uses of Gordon Ridge. Acquiring properties in the San Gregorio watershed provides the District with water rights that can be used to support agricultural uses, operational needs (such as housing or field offices), or the opportunity to designate waters for in-stream flow, leaving water in the creek for salmonid habitat.

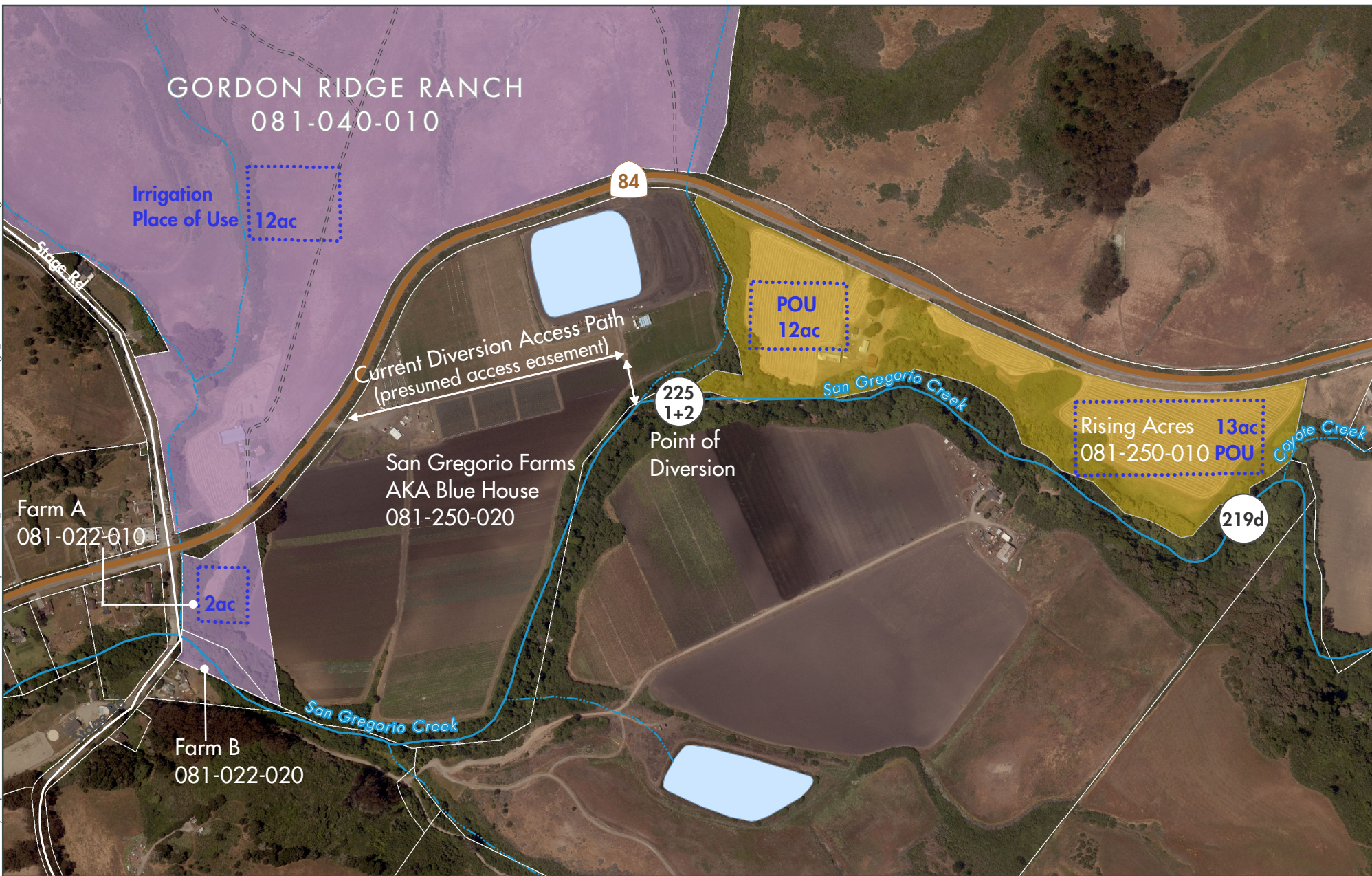
The Decree recognizes a creek diversion, identified as POD 225(2), on the mainstem of San Gregorio Creek that provides irrigation water to three parcels: Gordon Ridge Ranch, Gordon Ridge Ranch A, and “Rising Acres”, all of which are owned by POST. The District has approved the purchase of the Gordon Ridge Ranch and Gordon Ridge A parcels.

POD 225(2) does not currently provide water to Gordon Ridge Ranch. There is no water pipeline that serves this parcel, and there is no current demand for creek water from POD 225(2) because

there are several springs and a pond on the Gordon Ridge Ranch property that are used to serve its water needs (these surface waters are distinct and separate from San Gregorio Creek and are not part of the Decree). The springs located on Gordon Ridge Ranch currently provide the water needed for the property's residential and grazing uses. Rising Acres has irrigation needs but is also served by a separate diversion, POD 219d, for irrigation. The allotment reflects the recent and projected future uses of the parcels. Gordon Ridge Ranch has grazing and domestic uses. Gordon Ridge Farm A is exclusively used for row crops, requiring irrigation water. Rising Acres currently has domestic and irrigation uses and may have stockwatering, depending on future agricultural operations.

Attachment 1: Gordon Ridge Water Rights Map

Path: G:\Projects\Tunitas\_Creek\CareyRanch\GordonRidge\_WaterAllocation\GordonRidgeWaterAllocationV2\_20200526.mxd  
Created By: Lopez



### Gordon Ridge - Rising Acres Water Allocation Map

- Future MROSD Fee Property
- Rising Acres
- Place of Use
- Waterbody
- Stream**
- Perennial
- Intermittent

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
5/27/2020



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