



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-24-117
Meeting 24-26
September 25, 2024

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Partnership Agreement for Little Butano Creek Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Project

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to enter a Partnership Agreement with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District for the completion of a fisheries restoration project on Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve.

SUMMARY

In April 2024, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) awarded the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) \$3.74 million to restore fish passage and improve stream and riparian habitat within Little Butano Creek (Project), in Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Preserve). Construction activities would occur in summer 2025 across 3.1 acres in the Preserve. The General Manager recommends entering into a Partnership Agreement that would authorize the RCD to carry out the project on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) lands.

DISCUSSION

Little Butano Creek is a perennial stream and the largest tributary to Butano Creek. Butano Creek and Pescadero Creek converge in the 320-acre Pescadero Marsh, which is the most significant outer coast estuary within the 150 miles of coastline between Elkhorn Slough, Monterey County, and Tomales Bay, Marin County. Accordingly, the Central California Coast Coho Recovery Plan identifies the 81-square-mile Pescadero-Butano Watershed as a focal area for coho salmon protection.

The RCD has a decades-long history of restoring fish passage, enhancing floodplains and lagoons, and improving flows within the watershed and this Project builds on those investments. The Project was identified, prioritized, developed, and reviewed through the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program Technical Advisory Committee, a partnership of the RCD and federal, state, and local regulatory resource agencies and tribes focused on collaborative species recovery.

Planning funding was provided by Peninsula Open Space Trust and the County of San Mateo. For final design and construction, the RCD was awarded \$3.74 million by CDFW. The RCD also secured additional design and construction funding in the amounts of \$310,000 from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center and \$450,000 from California Department of Water Resources.

The Project involves addressing a fish migration barrier by adjusting the channel grade and 3.1 acres of habitat along the creek to restore fish passage using wood structures, pools, and backwatering of perched floodplain terraces. More than a century of human activities within the Little Butano Creek floodplain have resulted in major incision and realignment through most of the creek's middle and lower reaches. To make way for roads, grazing, and agriculture, Little Butano Creek was rerouted from a meandering system to a straightened channel, which caused the deeply incised creek bed to align with a bedrock outcropping approximately 1,000 feet upstream from the confluence with Butano Creek. This 15-foot-tall outcrop is the current limit of anadromy (migration of fish that spawn in fresh water and migrate to the ocean to forage and mature). Sediment excavated from the channel during construction will be placed on District land adjacent to the Project site to avoid the greenhouse gas emissions and costs needed to export the sediment offsite.

By addressing the barrier, federally threatened steelhead and endangered coho salmon will have access to an additional 2.7 miles of creek. However, an upstream culvert can restrict passage during low streamflow in summer (the RCD and County of San Mateo are working together in the design phase to remediate this barrier). A diversion dam on Little Butano Creek for the Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company in Butano State Park will be the new limit to migration once the bedrock outcropping barrier is eliminated.

Activities to be conducted on District lands include:

- Realign the creek above the outcrop and adjust the streambed grade to restore fish passage.
- Install approximately 19 woody debris structures to increase habitat complexity, sort and store sediment, and provide shelter and cover for fish.
- Create four low-flow pools for fish to utilize during droughts.
- Recontour the stream bank to backwater existing, but perched, floodplain terraces.
- Restore a historic meander and confluence zone with an unnamed tributary of Little Butano Creek.
- Develop temporary access routes to the stream corridor.
- Deposit spoils excavated from the creek channel.

FISCAL IMPACT

None - the project will be completed and paid for by the RCD.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

None - the RCD initiated the project prior to District purchase of the Preserve.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. District staff transmitted an email to the Farm Bureau notifying them of the Project.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The potential environmental impacts of the Project were evaluated in the Notice of Exemption (State Clearinghouse Number 2023090380) for Small Habitat Restoration (Class 33, Section 15333) prepared by the San Mateo Resource Conservation District as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

NEXT STEPS

If authorized by the Board, the General Manager will enter a Partnership Agreement with the RCD for Project implementation. Permitting, bidding, construction, and project management would be completed by the RCD and is anticipated to take place over summer 2025.

Attachment(s)

1. Project map.

Responsible Department Head:

Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department Manager

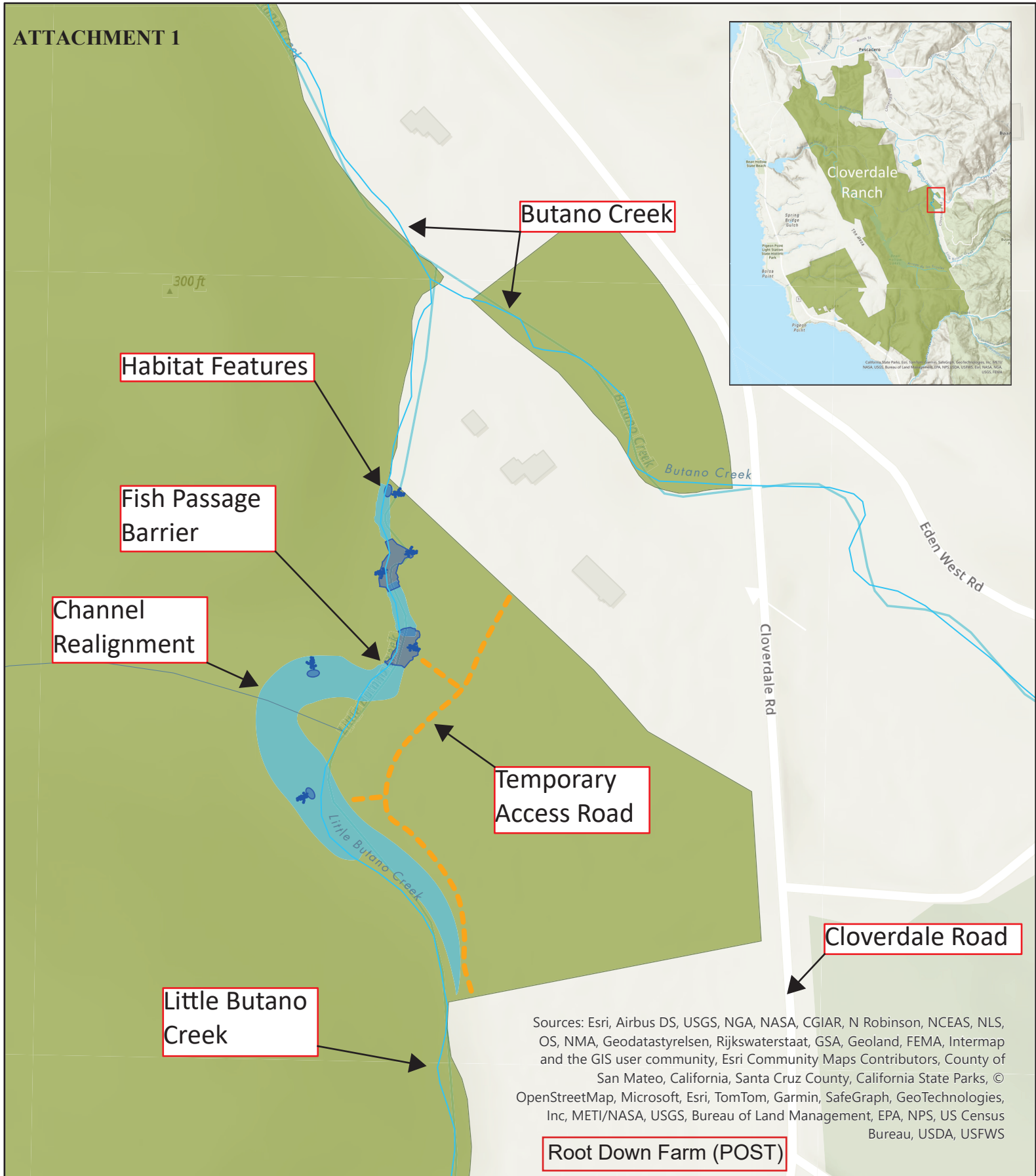
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ATTACHMENT 1



Legend

- Log Structure
- Low-flow Pool
- Project Boundary
- Preserve Boundary

0 0.010.03 0.05 Miles

