



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 15, 2021

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Midpen Open Space releases draft environmental impact report on newly developed Wildland Fire Resiliency Program for public comment

LOS ALTOS, Calif. [January 15, 2021] — A draft report analyzing potential environmental impacts of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s newly developed Wildland Fire Resiliency Program was released today. The public is invited to review the report and provide comments on its environmental analysis through March 1.

The public is also invited to participate in and provide comments during a virtual public hearing on the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program draft environmental impact report with the Midpen board of directors on **Thursday, February 25 at 5 p.m.**

Details on how to review and comment on the environmental analysis in the draft report and participate in the public hearing can be found at openspace.org/wfrp.

“A changing climate, 150 years of fire suppression and a growing population are combining to create a longer and more intense fire season in California,” Midpen Senior Resource Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter said. “To meet these current challenges, Midpen is proactively expanding our environmentally sensitive fuels management through the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program.”

The goals of Midpen’s Wildland Fire Resiliency Program are to assist ecosystems in becoming healthier and more resilient, reduce wildland fire risk and facilitate fire suppression. The program has four components:

- Vegetation management plan
- Prescribed fire plan
- Preserve maps to assist fire agencies
- Monitoring plan

A final environmental impact report will be prepared later in 2021, and if approved, will allow Midpen to begin expanding its environmentally sensitive vegetation management work across the 26 public open space preserves it manages. The prescribed fire plan requires further environmental analysis and would tentatively be added to Midpen’s land management toolbox in 2022.

Wildland fire prevention, preparation and response are central to Midpen’s work in caring for the land. Staff work year-round maintaining hundreds of miles of fuel breaks and fire roads. Through Midpen’s

conservation grazing program on the San Mateo County Coast, approximately 6,500 acres are grazed by cattle to help restore native grasslands while reducing fuels for fire safety. Midpen provides annual fire suppression training to staff who are often first responders to fires and assist fire departments including on the CZU August Lightning Complex Fire and as ecological advisors. Smoking, campfires and firearms are never allowed in Midpen preserves.

“Fire is a fact of life in California, and everyone plays a role in living safely with it. Midpen’s role is to manage our open space lands for public safety and ecological health, while coordinating closely with local fire departments responsible for fire suppression,” Sifuentes-Winter said. “The public plays a role, too, in preventing wildland fires from starting and in protecting their homes with defensible space and home hardening measures.”

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The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land of regional significance in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. On the San Mateo County coast, our mission also includes preserving agricultural land of regional significance and rural character and encouraging viable agricultural use of land resources. Midpen has successfully protected nearly 65,000 acres of public open space land in the Santa Cruz Mountains region since 1972. openspace.org