

ANNEX 16. MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Welcome to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District



The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) is a regional greenbelt system in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is comprised of over 60,000 acres of land in 26 open space preserves protected for public enjoyment, making a preserve system of diverse and unparalleled beauty in one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country. Preserves include redwood, oak, and fir forests, chaparral-covered hillsides, riparian corridors, grasslands, and wetlands along the San Francisco Bay.

Preserves, ranging from 55 to over 18,000 acres, are open to the public free of charge, 365 days a year. Visitors will find over 220 miles of trails, ranging from easy to challenging terrain.

History

The District was founded in 1972 to preserve the regional greenbelt in northwestern Santa Clara County. The voters expanded the District in 1976 to include southern San Mateo County and again in 1992, to add a small portion of Santa Cruz County. In 2004, through the Coastsides Protection Program, the District's boundary was extended to the Pacific Ocean in San Mateo County.



Mission

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Board of Directors

The District is governed by a seven-member elected board of directors. Each board member is elected to serve a four-year term and represents a geographic ward of approximately equal populations.

Staffing

The staff currently consists of over 100 employees in six departments: Administration, Natural Resources, Operations, Planning, Public Affairs, and Real Property.

Funding

General funding is provided by a small share of the annual total property tax revenues collected within District boundaries, except on the San Mateo County Coastside. This amounts to about \$17 per \$100,000 of assessed property value, which currently provides approximately \$32.4 million (2013-14 fiscal year). Other revenue sources may include federal and state grants, interest and rental income, donations, land gifts, and note issues.



Measure AA

In June 2014, voters passed Measure AA, which authorized the District to issue up to \$300 million in bonds over the next 20-30 years for specific capital projects. The increase in tax rate will not exceed \$3.18 per \$100,000 of assessed property value within the District's entire jurisdiction. The District anticipates issuing the first series of Measure AA bonds in 2015, which will be reflected in the 2015-16 budget.

Volunteer Opportunities

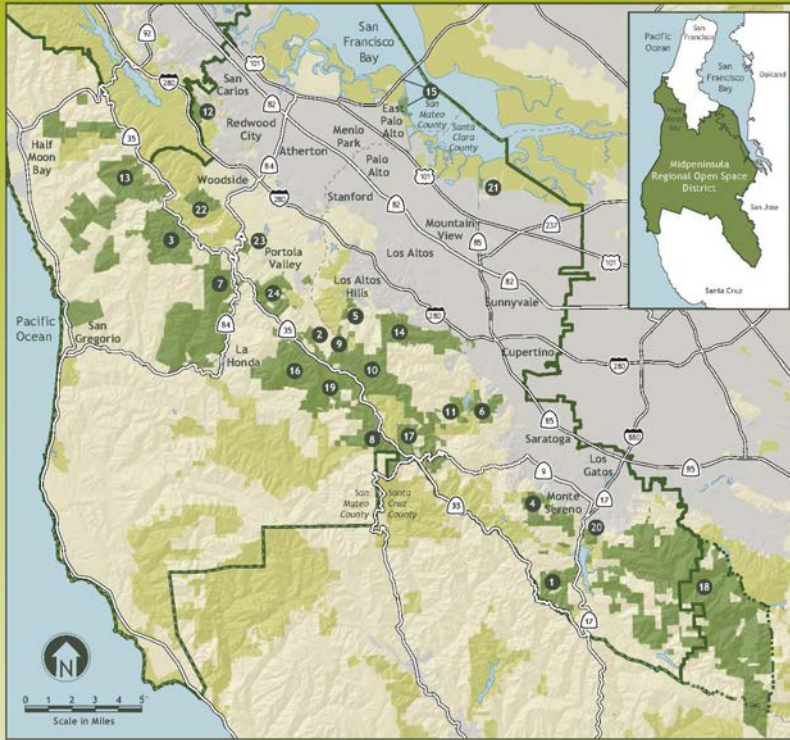
Over 500 volunteers assist the District each year ranging from one-day projects to ongoing natural history education, trail patrol, maintenance, and restoration programs. Programs are described online at www.openspace.org.



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Welcome to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District



#	Preserves	Acres	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Bear Creek Redwoods	1,417						
2	Coal Creek	508						
3	El Corte de Madera Creek	2,906						
4	El Sereno	1,419						
5	Foothills	212						
6	Fremont Older	739						
7	La Honda Creek	6,068						
8	Long Ridge	2,035						
9	Los Trancos	274						
10	Monte Bello	3,436						
11	Picchetti Ranch	328						
12	Pulgas Ridge	366						
13	Purissima Creek Redwoods	4,712						
14	Rancho San Antonio	3,988						

1. In designated area by permit only
 2. Kennedy-Iverson area only
 3. Mount Unimuhum area only
 4. On designated trails only
 5. On weekends, arrive early to find parking
 6. Overflow Trail parking area by permit only

#	Preserves	Acres	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	Ravenwood	376						
16	Russian Ridge	3,138						
17	Saratoga Gap	1,628						
18	Sierra Azul (Cathedral Oaks, Rancho de Guadalupe, & Mount Unimuhum Area)	18,831						
19	Skidmore Ridge	2,143						
20	St. Joseph's Hill	270						
21	Stevens Creek (Historic Indian Study Area)	55						
22	Treasure Hill	626						
23	Thornwood	1,647						
24	Windy Hill	1,414						

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserves
 Major city, county, state & federal parks, open space preserves, and publicly-owned watershed lands

ORGANIZATION AND JURISDICTION

District staff are trained in wildland fire suppression techniques and possess limited firefighting equipment; however, fire suppression is provided primarily through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), supplemented by local fire departments (such as Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills, Woodside, Saratoga, and the county fire departments for Santa Clara County), as well as statewide mutual aid agreements where firefighting resources are available when necessary for large wildland fire events.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) provides the land management expertise to provide for public safety and the protection of natural resources. This role extends also to vegetation management to reduce the severity of wildland fire, the resultant damage to resource values, and risks to public safety (Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District 2016).

The Board of Directors prioritized the development of resource management policies during a workshop held on October 25, 2004. Staff began development of a Wildland Fire Management Policy to address the management of MROSD lands consistent with existing policies and goals of the Guiding Principles within the San Mateo Coastal Annexation Area Service Plan (Service Plan).

The Board of Directors formally adopted the revised Resource Management Policies, including the Final Wildland Fire Management Policy, on January 11, 2012.

PLANNING TEAM PARTICIPATION

The MROSD has been an active participant on the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Core Team and through attendance at the community workshops and other public outreach events.

SUMMARY

The following preserves are located in Santa Clara County:

- Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve
- Coal Creek Open Space Preserve
- El Sereno Open Space Preserve
- Foothills Open Space Preserve
- Fremont Older Open Space Preserve
- Los Trancos Open Space Preserve
- Monte Bello Open Space Preserve
- Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserve
- Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve
- Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve
- Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve
- St Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve
- Stevens Creek Nature Study Area

For specific information on each preserve please refer to: <http://www.openspace.org/visit-a-preserve>.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE (WUI) AREA DESCRIPTION

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREA DEFINED

As defined in the MROSD Resource Management Policies (MROSD 2014), wildland urban interface (WUI) refers to areas where residential development, from a few scattered houses to larger subdivisions or communities, exists immediately adjacent to or nearby parks, open space preserves, or other relatively undeveloped “wildlands.” Important issues within this interface include defensible space around residential structures, emergency vehicle access, and residential fire improvements such as water tanks, fire hydrants, sprinklers, and fire-resistant construction techniques.

FIRE HISTORY

Many of the vegetation communities on MROSD lands evolved with the occurrence of periodic fire and have acquired unique adaptations to withstand and regenerate after a fire. Without periodic fire, these plant communities build abnormally high and dangerous fuel levels and are susceptible to large scale destructive fire events (MROSD 2014). From 1860 through the early 1920s, unprecedented alterations took place within the forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The ancient “old growth” forests were mostly clear-cut and burned. This removed the largest, most fire-resistant trees from the forested landscape. The forest that has grown back typically consists of a much higher density of trees that are more susceptible to fire.

This period of time also corresponded to the first wave of development within the San Francisco Bay Region and ushered in a new paradigm for wildland fire response: immediate suppression. This has increased the time interval between fires on most land to time periods substantially longer than Native American burning and natural lightning-caused fire. The result is a vegetated landscape that has largely been prevented from burning, and that has accumulated fuel loads and structural characteristics that have not occurred on the landscape for thousands of years, if ever.

For additional fire history information countywide, please see Figure 3.5 in the main Santa Clara County CWPP document.

HAZARDOUS FUEL CHARACTERISTICS

For fuel model information for the county, please refer to Section 4.6.3 and Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4 of the main Santa Clara County CWPP document.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY

The MROSD possesses a number of firefighting apparatuses, including a water tank truck and smaller water tanks with hoses outfitted on Ranger vehicles, as well as portable water-pack/spray outfits for individual personnel. Fire training is also provided to MROSD personnel who may be involved in combating wildland fire (MROSD 2014).

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The MROSD's Public Affairs department is charged with communicating information to the public. MROSD staff works closely with local schools, districts, agencies, and other special groups to provide environmental education and interpretive programming to students, organizations, and the general public. The Public Affairs department utilize publications, presentations, and media collaboration for outreaching to the public. The volunteer and docent programs provide a means for the public to learn firsthand about stewardship, by participating in MROSD projects. The docent program trains docents to conduct activities on the preserves and interpret MROSD resources.

Interpretive programs are often the most effective means of stimulating understanding and appreciation of open space, providing information, promoting stewardship of resources, and helping ensure visitor safety (MROCD 2014).

The MROSD implements defensible space around its own structures, works with its tenants, and in June 2009 launched a Defensible Space Permit Program that allows neighbors whose homes are located within 100 feet of MROSD boundaries to increase their fire safety by reducing vegetation on adjacent MROSD lands once they have treated their own land (MROSD 2016).

The MROSD is an active participant in coordinating with various fire agencies and community fire planning efforts. These include the development of regional fire plans, Fire Safe council meetings, and the preparation of CWPPs. The MROSD also coordinates with local fire agencies and other park agencies conducting and participating in prescribed fire for resource management purposes (MROSD 2014).

POLICIES, REGULATIONS, ORDINANCES, AND CODES

Basic Policy of the MROSD can be found here:

http://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/basic_policy.pdf

The Basic Policy adopted March 10, 1999, directs the MROSD to “follow management policies that ensure proper care of the land, that provide public access appropriate to the nature of the land, and that are consistent with ecological values and public safety.”

Land Use Regulations for MROSD lands can be found here:

http://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/District_Regulations.pdf

SECTION 101. PURPOSE. These [Land Use] regulations are adopted to provide responsible stewardship for District Lands, to establish orderly use, and to maintain a natural and quiet environment for persons on the lands. They are established according to the Basic Policy of the Board of Directors of MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT, adopted March 27, 1974, and as amended March 10, 1999, that “The District follows management policies that ensure proper care of the land, that provide public access appropriate to the nature of the land, and that are consistent with ecological values and public safety.” (MROSD Revised and Adopted by Ordinance No. 14-01, February 12, 2014).

Policy pertaining to wildfire management on MROSD lands is described in the 2014 MROSD Resource Management Policies document; the relevant policies are summarized below:

http://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/Resource_Management_Policies.pdf

WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT:

- Goal WF- Manage District land to reduce the severity of wildland fire and to reduce the impact of fire suppression activities within District Preserves and adjacent residential areas; manage habitats to support fire as a natural occurrence on the landscape; and promote District and regional fire management objectives.
 - Policy WF-1 Implement necessary fire and fuel management practices to protect public health and safety, protect natural resources, and to reduce the impacts of wildland fire.
 - Policy WF-2 Aggressively support the immediate suppression of all unplanned fires that threaten human life, private property or public safety.
 - Policy WF-3 Work with adjacent landowners and fire agencies to maintain adequate fire clearance around qualifying structures. (See FM-5 and WF-1: Measure 5)
 - Policy WF-4 Manage District vegetation communities to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and to maintain biological diversity. (See VM-1 and FM-6)
 - Policy WF-5 Conduct prescribed burns to re-introduce fire into native ecosystems and maintain natural ecological processes on District lands.
 - Policy WF-6 Foster and maintain interagency fire management partnerships.
 - Policy WF-7 Conduct research and monitoring to refine fire management practices

Other policies from the 2014 Resource Management Policies that relate to wildfire management and prevention include:

GRAZING MANAGEMENT:

- Goal GM- Manage District land with livestock grazing that is protective of natural resources and that is compatible with public access; to maintain and enhance the diversity of native plant and animal communities, manage vegetation fuel for fire protection, help sustain the local agricultural economy, and preserve and foster appreciation for the region's rural agricultural heritage.
 - Policy GM-3 Monitor environmental response to grazing on District lands.
 - Monitor forage utilization and distribution by grazing animals to assure appropriate amounts of residual dry matter (RDM) remain on the ground to achieve desired resource management objectives. In the course of RDM monitoring, evaluate and report on wildland fire fuel levels that may result in an increased risk of wildland fire.

FOREST MANAGEMENT:

- Goal FM- Manage District land to retain and promote biologically diverse, dynamic forest conditions; maintain and enhance high quality forest and aquatic habitat; encourage and enhance the development of late-seral conifer forest; provide for visitor experiences within diverse forest habitat; and promote District and regional fire management objectives.
 - Policy FM-5 Provide necessary fire and fuel management practices to protect forest resources and public health and safety. (See WF policies)
 - Maintain essential roads for emergency fire access, and forest management activities undertaken to reduce fire hazard.
 - Maintain adequate fire clearance around District structures and facilities. (See WF-3 and WF-1: Measure 5)
 - Encourage neighboring property owners to maintain adequate fire clearance around existing development. Consult with regulatory agencies to encourage that construction of new development maintains fire agency recommended setbacks for fire clearance between new development and District forest and woodland.
 - Evaluate the potential to reduce forest fuel loading through the removal of smaller trees to reduce forest floor fuel buildup and ladder fuels.
 - Coordinate with fire agencies and local communities to define locations where fire protection infrastructure is desirable and practical.
 - Reintroduce fire as a resource management tool to reduce forest floor fuels and reestablish fire for ecosystem health where stand conditions, access, and public safety permit. Coordinate with other agencies for planning and implementation.
 - Seek grant opportunities and partnerships for fuel management projects and monitoring.
 - Policy FM-6 Protect forest health from intense wildfire, pests, and pathogens with high potential to cause damage.
 - Evaluate potential for forest loss to intense wildfire, pests and pathogens where effective methods are available and justified.

ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION:

- Policy ES-1 Manage historic grassland areas that are threatened by shrub encroachment. (See VM-1). Identify the most cost-effective, safe, and least environmentally damaging management technique for shrub removal, including livestock grazing, mechanical removal, and prescribed fire.
- Policy ES-3 Facilitate regeneration of disturbance-dependent special status, rare, or unique plants.

- Research, document, and implement site specific fire prescriptions to improve regeneration of fire adapted and special status vegetation in fire-dependent ecosystems where feasible.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Santa Clara County CWPP includes a Composite Fire Risk/Hazard Assessment that uses fire behavior modeling to determine potential fire behavior and is based on fuel characteristics, topography, weather, and fire history. The Composite Risk/Hazard Assessment for the planning area is shown in [Figure 16.1](#). For more information on the methodology for this assessment, please refer to Section 4.6.1 in Chapter 4 of the Santa Clara CWPP.

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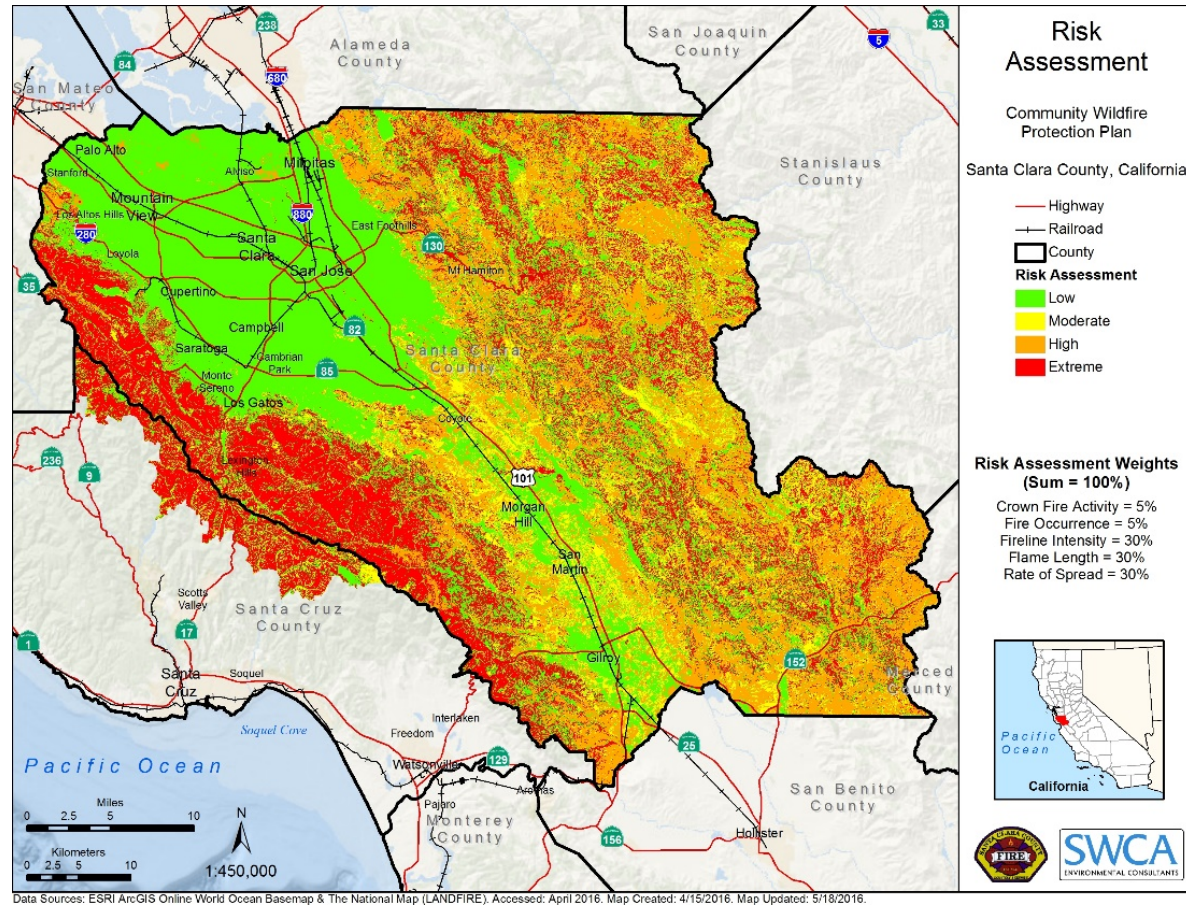


Figure 16.1. Composite Risk/Hazard Assessment for Santa Clara County.

IDENTIFY CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY VALUES AT RISK

MROSD preserves provide recreational opportunities to the public and are therefore important community values that are at risk from wildfire. The preserves have trails for hikers, bikers, runners, equestrians, and dog walkers. MROSD preserves are less developed than other parks, with fewer facilities, for example, no garbage cans, more limited parking, restrooms, and water. The MROSD encourages users to leave a light “footprint” on the land and attempts to balance recreational uses with habitat restoration and conservation (MROSD 2016).

Table 16.1-Table 16.4 describe agency/community specific mitigation projects. Figure 16.2 illustrates mitigation projects developed by MROSD and the Core Team.

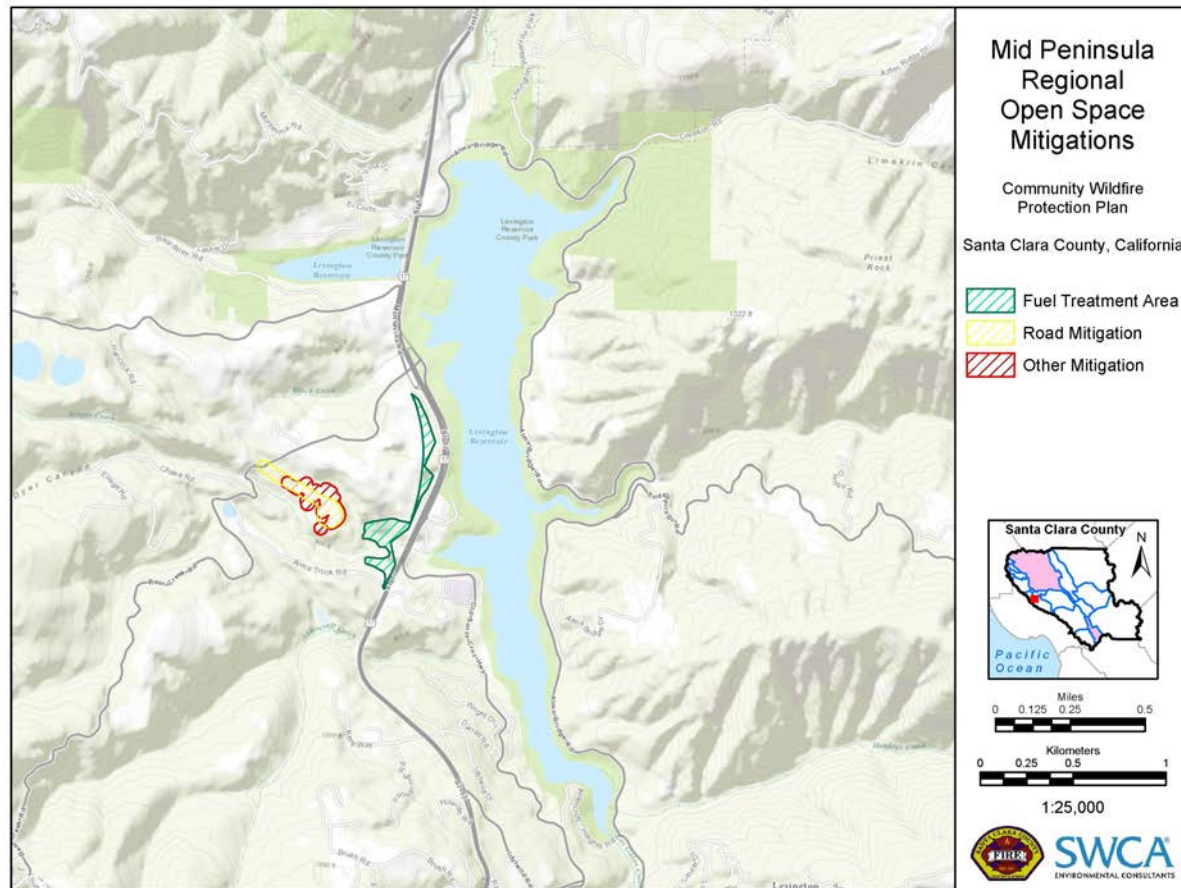


Figure 16.2. Mitigation projects on some MROSD lands in the County

Table 16.1. Recommended Fuel Reduction Projects on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Lands

ID MROSD	Project Description	Location and land ownership	Method	Serves to:	Timeline for Action	Priority (1,2,3)	Monitoring	Resources/funding sources available
Non-tiered projects								
MROSD FR1	Maintain disc lines when deemed appropriate– (B)	MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	Tractor disc the soil 6 – 12 inches deep with an average width of 30 feet where possible. Occasional overhead trimming with a pole saw to where needed to allow tractor access. Encroaching brush on disc lines is removed with chain saws, boom flails, mowing, or masticator equipment.	Protect life, property, ecosystems, and watersheds.	Ongoing Spring 2016	1	Requires regular annual maintenance to be effective.	MROSD
MROSD FR2	Defensible space around District structures and tenant facilities – (B)-	MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	Create defensible space shaded fuel breaks up to 100 feet wide where feasible based on topography and terrain.	Protect life and property.	Ongoing/Spring 2016	1	Annual Spring inspection and maintenance to ensure the defensible space remains clear of ladder fuel. Monitor for erosion and invasive species.	MROSD funding for District structures. Commercial lease holders responsible for clearance.
Strategic Goal: FR1- Incorporate single track trails into fire defense system where practical								
MROSD FR1.1	Brushing single track designated trails annually –(B)-	MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	Vegetation is brushed back by hand 2 – 4 'uphill, 2' downhill and 10 ' high from single track multi use trails, 2-4' uphill, 2' downhill, and 8' high from hiking only.	Provides access to properties. District staff can access by foot, bike, motorcycle, or ATV.	Ongoing/Spring 2016	1	Annual Spring inspection and maintenance completed when needed.	MROSD
Strategic Goal: FR7- Develop roadside fuel treatment program, including suite of methods available and sustainability mechanism								
MROSD FR7.1	Brushing roads approximately every three years- (B)-	MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	Roadside vegetation is brushed back 3-12' uphill, 3-12' downhill 12' minimum high. Roads to structures or designated 13.5' high. Tractor brushing with an articulating brushing arm.	Provide access for District patrol vehicles and other emergency service vehicles.	Ongoing/Spring 2016	1	Annual Spring inspection and maintenance completed when needed.	MROSD

*Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
Annex 16 – Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District*

ID MROSD	Project Description	Location and land ownership	Method	Serves to:	Timeline for Action	Priority (1,2,3)	Monitoring	Resources/funding sources available
MROSD FR7.2	Maintain fuel break- (B) -	MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County– El Sereno Preserve between Bohlman and Montevina Road.	Shaded fuel break .7miles long along road with 30' clearance on both sides.	Provides access for District patrol vehicles and other emergency service vehicles. Protects life, property, ecosystems, and watersheds.	Winter 2016	1	Regular maintenance needed to ensure the shaded fuel break remains clear of ladder vegetation. Monitor for erosion and invasive species.	Funding – WUI grants. Cal Fire and MROSD do not maintain shaded fuel breaks. Funding needed for maintenance.
MROSD FR7.3	Create an approximate 2 mile shaded fuel break along southbound Hwy 17 in the Cal Trans right away adjacent to the Bear Creek Preserve A)	Cal Trans.	Shaded fuel break along road 30' uphill and downhill.	Protect life, property, ecosystems, and watersheds.	Spring 2018	1	Regular maintenance needed to ensure the shaded fuel break remains clear of ladder vegetation. Monitor for erosion and invasive species.	Funding – WUI grants. Cal Fire and MROSD do not maintain shaded fuel breaks. Funding needed for maintenance

Table 16.2. Recommended Public Education and Outreach Projects on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Lands

ID	Project	Presented by	Target Date	Resources Needed	Serves to
Strategic goal EO9- Increase signage/replace or augment existing signage. Use existing signage to spread fire prevention message along highways and in public open space areas (trailheads, info kiosks) to reduce human ignitions.					
MROSD EO9.1	Hazardous Fire Area/No Smoking signs- MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County. Post signs at all designated access points on gates and at staging areas.	MROSD	Ongoing/Spring 2016	Posted by MROSD staff	Reduce human ignitions on MROSD lands.

Table 16.3. Recommended Firefighting Capability Projects on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Lands

ID	Project Description	Fire Department/ Agency	Benefits of the Project to the community	Timeline	Priority (1,2,3)	Resources/ funding sources available
Non-tiered projects						
MROSD FC1	Patrol trucks equipped with slide on fire pumpers during fire season. MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	MROSD	Patrol preserves and provide initial attack capabilities and mop up	Ongoing/ 2016	1	MROSD
MROSD FC2	Area orientation in conjunction with all local and state fire departments on area orientation of District lands. MROSD all District lands in Santa Clara County.	MROSD, Cal Fire, County Fire, San Jose Fire	Area orientation to fuels, access points, staging areas, safety zones, water resources, maps, communication, and resources.	Ongoing/ 2016	1	MROSD and Fire Depts.
MROSD FC3	Grading designated trails that are road width on an as needed basis. MROSD all District lands in Santa Clara County.	MROSD	Ensure District patrol vehicle access Improve access for Type 3 engines Install rolling drain dips when deemed appropriate. Reduce erosion and sedimentation.	Ongoing/ 2016	1	MROSD– involves CEQA in many cases

Table 16.4. Recommendations for Reducing Structural Ignitability on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Lands

ID	Project	Presented by	Programs Available	Description	Priority (1,2,3)	Timeline
Strategic Goal: SI4- Adopt common defensible space standards throughout the county						
MROSD SI4.1	Coordinate existing Defensible Space Permit Process with neighboring fire agencies and Fire Safe Council. .	MROSD	Defensible Space permit process. MROSD District lands in Santa Clara County.	Allows homeowner to apply for a permit to remove vegetation from District property within 100 feet of homes.	2	Spring 2016/ongoing.