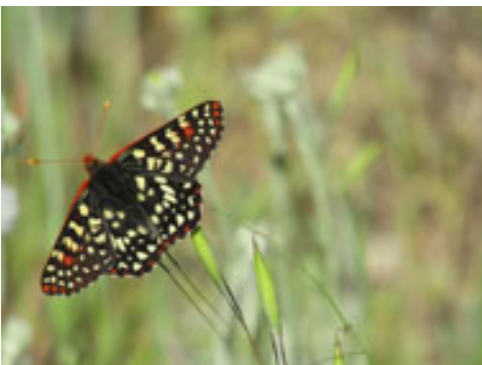




Major Accomplishments Report

July 1, 2020- June 30, 2021



FY21 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

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.

Coastside Mission:

To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

The following accomplishments highlight the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) focus on a balanced mission: land acquisition and preservation; natural resources protection and restoration; public access and education; and for the Coastside, encouraging agricultural use of land resources and preserving rural character.

These accomplishments encompass projects to expand trail connectivity, including the completion of the Saratoga-to-the-Sea Trail Connection in partnership with the City of Saratoga that connects Saratoga Quarry Park to Sanborn County Park. They also show progress on various priorities and goals, such as: habitat restoration; wildlife corridors; reduction of wildland fire severity and risk; engagement and outreach to diverse visitors; land conservation partnerships; and the protection of more than 65,000 acres of public open space lands.

On the San Mateo County Coast, accomplishments also include acquiring additional agricultural lands to preserve important natural resources and scenic open space values, and improving agricultural infrastructure to support the conservation grazing program that helps protect the biodiversity of coastal grasslands. In addition to completing projects on the land, Midpen has also placed significant effort in strengthening the administrative and organizational systems that are necessary to support our mission, now and into the future.

COVID-19 had a major impact on project and program delivery in 2020, which continued into FY21. Field staff operations were limited to essential functions, and group events, permits and volunteer activities were cancelled for most of the fiscal year. Some construction activities were initially shut down or delayed. Many staff efforts shifted to keeping preserves open as a haven for safe outdoor recreation, one of the few safe outlets for the public under shelter-in-place orders that began in March of 2020. Midpen preserves saw record visitation levels throughout most of the fiscal year. All in all, FY21 was a busy, productive, and rewarding year. Much was accomplished and staff was able to adapt to keep preserves open, providing an essential public health service.

LAND ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION

- ❖ Purchased, exchanged, or received gifts of 686 acres of land valued at \$7.87 million dollars:
 - Acquired a 54% undivided interest of the 600-acre South Cowell property as an addition to ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve*** with exclusive possession of the 371-acre upland area from Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). This purchase provides opportunities for future parking and trails to support the Purisima-to-the-Sea regional trail, for which plans are underway to connect Purisima Creek Redwoods to the Cowell-Purisima Coastal Trail. The purchase also supports Midpen’s coastal mission by encouraging agricultural use of land resources, preserving the rural character, and protecting valuable watersheds for rare fish recovery.
 - Partnered with POST to purchase a 182-acre property from San Jose Water Company as an addition to ***El Sereno Preserve*** that connects two segments of the Aquinas Trail that may become a future addition to the regional Bay Area Ridge Trail.
 - Purchased the 130-acre Billingsley property as an addition to the Loma Prieta area of the ***Sierra Azul Preserve***, facilitating the proposed Mount Umunhum-to-Sea regional trail corridor and eliminating an inholding to the preserve.
 - Purchased the 2.46-acre Riser-Nelson property adjacent to the South Cowell property as an addition to ***Purisima Creek Redwoods***.
 - Received a 0.12-acre gift parcel as an addition to ***Sierra Azul***.
 - Received a 0.06-acre gift parcel as an addition to ***Purisima Creek Redwoods***.
- ❖ Entered into an exchange agreement with San Mateo County at ***Pulgas Ridge Preserve***, which granted Midpen a 10-car parking easement and \$380,000 in mitigation funding for California red-legged frog habitat in exchange for a stormwater outfall easement.
- ❖ Received approval from the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and State Coastal Commission for minor amendments to the County zoning and subdivision ordinances that align County regulations with the State Coastal Act and support public recreation.
- ❖ Negotiated reciprocal road access and waterline easements with neighboring property owners at the ***La Honda Creek Preserve*** Red Barn area.
- ❖ Worked with POST to initiate botanical studies and complete water infrastructure assessments at the Cloverdale Ranch property in preparation for a potential future purchase.

NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

- ❖ Completed projects and actions that protect sensitive animal species and wildlife corridors:
 - Monitored sensitive species populations to assess the success of habitat restoration projects in ***La Honda Creek*** and ***Russian Ridge preserves***.
 - Conducted a newt mortality study along Alma Bridge Road (a public road) using drift fence/pitfall traps near ***Sierra Azul*** via a partnership with POST and with assistance

- from Santa Clara County Parks to understand the roadway impact on the local migrating newt population. Engaged volunteers to count road mortalities and live newts found in the traps (which were subsequently safely relocated across the roadway). A consultant tabulated and analyzed the data and provided a draft report to document findings. This data will inform potential partnership projects to protect newts migrating to their breeding habitat in Lexington Reservoir.
- Continued the Highway 17 Wildlife and Regional Trail Crossings project that will provide a safe wildlife corridor and a separate regional trail crossing the highway:
 - Completed the Request for Proposals process and contracted with AECOM for CEQA/National Environmental Policy Act services.
 - Hosted monthly meetings with Caltrans.
 - Completed cultural and biological field studies for the entire project, and engineering and geotechnical studies within the Caltrans right of way.
 - Developed a mitigation credit agreement strategy.
 - Collaborated with outside researchers to perform bird counts at multiple preserves, these surveys help assess populations and protect sensitive resources during maintenance and construction activities.
 - Analyzed acoustic data and worked on the Habitat Suitability Assessment for the Marbled Murrelet Recovery project and completed the 2021 early season surveys at **Purissima Creek Redwoods** and **El Corte de Madera preserves**. The recorded data is used to detect the presence of marbled murrelets, which are critically endangered seabirds that nests almost exclusively in old-growth forests.
 - Collected survey data and genetic samples, including data from conservation partners on lands outside Midpen preserves, to identify the presence and ranges of American badgers and burrowing owls and the critical habitat linkages that need protection to ensure these species thrive. Created a Badger/Burrowing Owl Habitat Assessment project webpage and offered a public virtual event to share information.
 - Began a multi-year study of mountain lions in Midpen preserves where reported human and mountain lion interactions are more frequent. Collared two individual mountain lions in high use preserves to track their movements and study whether heavy visitor use influences mountain lion behavior and determine if special management actions are necessary to protect wildlife and visitors.
- ❖ Completed projects and actions that protect sensitive plant species and restore habitats:
- Began 4th year of targeted invasive species removal at **Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve** with partial funding from a 5-year Valley Water grant following Midpen's Integrated Pest Management Program to restore native habitats.
 - Continued a partnership with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District to conduct outreach and treatment of high-priority invasive plants on adjacent private properties. This initiative expands citizen awareness and action to control

- invasive plants on private lands and avoid reinfestation of adjacent, protected open space lands.
- Completed a forest inventory and road assessments and drafted the La Honda Forest Health Assessment to inform the development of a forest health plan for lands in ***La Honda Creek Preserve***.
 - Implemented annual Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program activities to improve native habitats by removing invasive plants that negatively impact native plant and animal communities.
 - Completed phytophthora research with Oregon State University regarding soil pathogens at restoration sites to protect native plants from fungal disease.
 - Collaborated with outside researchers to perform botanical surveys at multiple preserves, these surveys help assess the health of Midpen habitats and protect sensitive plants during maintenance and construction activities.
- ❖ Completed projects and actions to rehabilitate lands:
- Removed over 300 tons of hazardous waste from a riparian corridor and planted ~240 willow stakes to reintroduce native plants and reclaim habitat for special status species at an old landfill site in ***Miramontes Ridge Preserve***.
 - Decommissioned four abandoned wells in ***Sierra Azul Preserve*** to protect underground water aquifers from potential pollution.
- ❖ Submitted a letter to Lehigh Quarry outlining critical issues of concern that affect Midpen visitors, employees, and the resources at the neighboring ***Rancho San Antonio Preserve***. Midpen and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors agreed in concept to a partnership to enforce potential violations of the Ridgeline Easement, which was set aside to keep the ridgeline intact and serves to protect the preserve from ongoing quarry operations.
- ❖ Presented the Science Advisory Panel (SAP) analysis on the following topics:
- Grazing – with the finding that conservation cattle grazing is an effective tool to manage and preserve vital grassland habitats.
 - Landscape Monitoring – recommending key species and habitats to monitor at the regional landscape level for assessing changes in populations and distribution over time.
 - Recreation – presenting the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation as part 1 of the study. Part 2 will identify potential impacts of recreation and include an assessment of e-bike use.

Midpen formed the SAP in 2019 to provide an independent, science-based review of key issues and serve as a resource for guiding future land management decisions. The panel includes scientists and experts in local ecology and natural history, climate change, and land management from two locally-esteemed research organizations: San Francisco Estuary Institute and Point Blue Conservation Science.

- ❖ Completed projects that support Midpen’s conservation grazing program and grassland management, including:
 - Completed construction of livestock fencing along the eastern and northern boundaries of the Bluebrush grazing property in ***Purissima Creek Preserve***.
 - Completed design, permitting, and construction of the Mindego Pond Improvements project at ***Russian Ridge Preserve*** to maintain stock ponds that support endangered San Francisco garter snakes and threatened red-legged frogs.
 - Made significant improvements to a spring box at the Lone Madrone grazing property in ***La Honda Creek Preserve***. Installed a new water line from the improved spring box to a new water tank in pasture 3 and to a new water trough in pasture 4. These improvements provide water for cattle and wildlife and distribute grazing activities to effectively manage the grassland habitat.
 - Improved the water system at ***Purissima Creek Redwoods Preserve*** to expand active grassland management through conservation grazing.
 - Amended Midpen’s grazing policy and the affected leases to support the use of conservation grazing for managing grasslands. These amendments provide for ongoing research of safe wildlife and livestock protection measures that reduce conflicts and allow for modest reimbursements to address livestock loss.
 - Began five years of research on the effectiveness of safe wildlife and livestock protection measures and their effect on animal behavior, health, and grazing productivity to identify effective practices that deter wildlife-livestock conflicts to continue supporting the conservation grazing program.

PUBLIC ACCESS, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- ❖ Completed construction of a 0.6-mile segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail with a new boardwalk and bridge across sensitive bay wetlands that closes a critical regional trail gap at ***Ravenswood Preserve*** and creates 80 miles of continuous Bay Trail access. Celebrated the grand opening with an innovative virtual event that attracted 1,400 views.
- ❖ Resumed volunteer-assisted plant restoration activities and installed public interpretive information in and around Cooley Landing Park (entry sign, ethnobotany garden).
- ❖ Continued progress on public access projects at ***Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve***:
 - Demolished non-historic structures utilizing bat protection measures. Successfully bid out the Alma College public access and cultural rehabilitation/interpretive site improvement work with construction anticipated to begin August 2021.
 - Submitted permits to California Department of Fish & Wildlife and United States Army Corps of Engineers for Phase II Trail Improvements that will open a new trail network in the northeast corner of the preserve. Completed construction of the Briggs Creek Trail, Stables Loop Trail, and segments of a Multi-use Trail.

- Completed traffic studies along Bear Creek Road to inform the final design of a future trail/pedestrian crossing located at the northeast corner of the preserve.
 - Consulted with Santa Clara County Planning, Building and Fire departments on the Bear Creek Stables Project. Received Board approval to proceed with a Use Permit process to secure County permits. Completed 50% of the construction document set.
- ❖ Made significant progress on removing ADA accessibility barriers to improve access for people with different physical abilities:
- Completed ADA restroom replacements at **Windy Hill, Russian Ridge, and Monte Bello preserves.**
 - Initiated the design of easy access trail improvements at **Pulgas Ridge Preserve** and in areas surrounding Horseshoe Lake and Alpine Pond at **Skyline Ridge Preserve.**
 - Completed ADA-related improvements at **Rancho San Antonio Preserve** to the Permanente Trail, Rhus Ridge parking area, entrance stiles, and visitor-serving amenities.
 - In multiple preserves across the Skyline area, completed ADA-related improvements to parking spaces, door closers, and entrance stiles.
 - Developed draft ADA Guidelines for future improved trail signage.
- ❖ Continued efforts to open additional areas of the **La Honda Creek Preserve** to the public:
- Completed the La Honda Creek Public Access Working Group pilot engagement process with Committee review and Board approval of the recommendations for new public access and parking improvements to open the middle area of the preserve. Released a Request for Proposals to conduct technical surveys, site opportunities and constraints analysis, and a feasibility study of the recommendations.
 - Began the environmental review process (CEQA compliance) for the demolition and site cleanup of the dilapidated Redwood Cabin and stabilization/public interpretation of the White Barn.
 - Completed San Mateo County permits (grading, resource management, and building) for the Phase II Loop Trails in Lower La Honda Creek. Performed pre-construction biological surveys and completed 3,400 linear feet of trail construction with compacted aggregate base surfacing.
- ❖ Made significant progress on multimodal access projects to improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access to preserves, including:
- Completed the Multimodal Access Study at **Rancho San Antonio Preserve** with Committee review and Board approval of the recommended transportation demand management strategies. Prepared a high-level implementation plan for next steps. Completed signage installation efforts on Foothills Expressway and St. Joseph's Avenue in Los Altos.

- Issued a Request for Proposals and awarded a contract to conduct a Multimodal Access Study at ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***.
- ❖ Completed environmental review and certification of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Alpine Trail in ***Coal Creek Preserve***. Submitted permit applications to California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Coordinated with San Mateo County Public Works on a memorandum of understanding to streamline County permitting.
- ❖ Completed numerous projects and actions to improve public access and safety at ***Purisima Creek Redwoods Preserve***:
 - Refined the project scope of work and schedule for the Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking Project. Completed partnership funding agreements and received funding from partners to begin studies.
 - Worked with neighbors to address overflow parking issues on Purisima Creek Road that impact roadway circulation at the lower preserve entrance; applied for and received San Mateo County approval to expand the no parking zone in areas with narrow roadside shoulders and poor line of sight.
 - Hired expert consultants to initiate the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Feasibility and Planning project. Identified three potential regional trail options for consideration. Initiated preliminary technical studies for the proposed trail alignment and parking area. Developed and initiated the public engagement plan to solicit input.
- ❖ Completed numerous projects and actions to improve public access and safety at ***Sierra Azul Preserve***:
 - Completed geotechnical and traffic studies, confirmed the feasibility of restroom and parking upgrades, and established a permitting and public engagement approach with the Town of Los Gatos for the replacement of the Kennedy Trailhead restroom.
 - Presented programming alternatives for Committee review and received feedback for the Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project. Coordinated with partner agencies on project elements and regulatory requirements. Shared Committee feedback and project status with the Board.
 - Completed design, received County permits, and began construction of the Mount Umunhum Radar Tower repairs, which are necessary to reopen the eastern area of the summit to public access.
 - Finalized construction, implemented signage, and completed striping and pavement improvements along Mount Umunhum Road.
- ❖ Initiated vision and goal-setting process with the Planning and Natural Resource Committee for the Hawthorns area of ***Windy Hill Preserve***. Developed the stakeholder outreach plan for future consideration by the Planning and Natural Resource Committee. Reviewed the

proposed planning process and potential permit requirements with the Town of Portola Valley.

- ❖ Supported and funded the City of Saratoga through the final stages of trail and bridge construction and assisted with preparations for the grand opening for the Saratoga-to-the-Skyline Trail.
- ❖ Completed the rehabilitation of the Deer Hollow Farm White Barn at **Rancho San Antonio Preserve** to preserve an important historic and interpretive asset.
- ❖ Made significant progress on evaluating potential e-bike use, including:
 - Implemented a one-year pilot program and completed a four-month survey of e-bike use on designated paved and improved trails in **Rancho San Antonio** and **Ravenswood preserves**. The survey generated 399 intercept responses and observations in **Rancho San Antonio** and 158 in **Ravenswood**.
 - Partnered with Santa Clara County Parks to conduct intercept surveys on their unpaved multi-use trails where e-bikes are allowed. Developed the survey instrument and identified two suitable locations in two different parks to conduct the surveys starting July 2021.
- ❖ Identified trails proposed to be designated as part of the regional Stevens Creek Trail in **Monte Bello Preserve** and initiated development of the sign plan for the pilot signage program. This work is being done in collaboration with Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, Cupertino, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara County Parks.
- ❖ Improved trail tread and drainage features on 15 miles of fire road and 6 miles of single-track trail. Replaced and upgraded 16 culverts.
- ❖ Collaborated with regional partners to expand trail connectivity on the Peninsula through the Peninsula Trails Team/Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network, Bay to Sea Trail Planning Coalition, and Dumbarton Rail Corridor Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- ❖ Hired two interns to collect trail data for developing new trail signage that will include trail conditions information to better inform visitors about the trail network; developed the methodology and mapping protocols to perform the work.
- ❖ Completed multiple Districtwide actions in support of public outreach goals:
 - Increased circulation of the quarterly newsletter by 150% with an insertion in local newspapers.
 - Received Board approval for the Youth Outreach Plan and initiated a pilot program with four youth organizations. Activities were disrupted by COVID-19 for much of the year and are being restarted in Fiscal Year 2022.
 - Clarified the Ombudsperson Program process by improving upon the online inquiry form, resulting in more effective public use of the program.
 - Pitched 13 ideas about Midpen projects and activities resulting in nine stories published by local media outlets to continue informing the public of recent events.

- Received 370 entries for the Annual Photo Contest through successful online promotion and outreach.
 - Increased social media use, expanding the number of followers by nearly 16% to more than 23,000 and the total reach by social media platform to over 2.5 million.
- ❖ Pivoted the Interpretive and Education, Volunteer, and Community Outreach Programs to develop and post online educational and engaging content:
- Created more than 80 videos interpreting the natural resources, inspiring outdoor exploration, and sharing trail experiences.
 - Produced two “Pocket Naturalist Outings,” with a group of docent naturalists on the OuterSpatial app for public use that provide digitally curated hikes.
 - Produced *Poetry in the Preserves* weekly poetry reading video series where docents shared favorite poems in nature to celebrate National Poetry Month.
 - Produced a quarterly virtual nature engagement series for social media and web titled *Seasons of Open Space* that explores seasonal natural phenomena around Alpine Pond at ***Skyline Ridge Preserve*** in a video format.
 - Created a virtual school field trip called “Notes on Habitat” that can be accessed at any time by the public and schools. Developed a pilot live virtual field trip. Three 4th grade classes each received two online real-time classroom visits with staff prior to the end of the 2021 school year.
 - Hosted activities (five virtual and one in-person) with Latino Outdoors that attracted over 5,400 views and 14 participants for an in-person event.
 - Installed a livestream camera at the Daniels Nature Center to provide a remote view into nature.
 - Midpen’s use of online content increased public participation, generating as much as 3,300 views for one of the most viewed events.
- ❖ Returned volunteer programming with new safety protocols beginning in the fall of 2020 as allowed under public health regulations.
- Volunteer Trail Patrol returned and contributed over 5,000 hours along the trails and submitted 2,105 Patrol Reports, which included 619 reports of trail conditions or violations, supporting Midpen’s land stewardship and public outreach goals.
 - Provided 76 COVID-safe resource management volunteer project opportunities for long-term volunteers who perform crucial ongoing stewardship work in preserves.
 - Trained eight new Advanced Resource Management Steward (ARMS) volunteers who began ‘adopt-a-site’ restoration efforts.
 - ARMS volunteers contributed over 1,000 hours at their assigned resource management project sites, helping to restore native habitat across Midpen preserves by removing nonnative vegetation.

- ❖ Created a monthly volunteer stewardship newsletter, “What’s the Dirt”, to keep volunteers connected to Midpen and other area land management stewardship efforts.
- ❖ Hosted the annual Volunteer Recognition Event online to honor and thank our volunteers and docents for their hard work in support of Midpen’s mission.
- ❖ Issued 2,574 permits for a variety of activities, including research work, public use of the backpack campground, and after-hours astronomy viewing as allowed under the changing public health orders.
- ❖ Reviewed and amended Midpen’s land use regulations to respond to new use trends and changes in the law.

GENERAL/MIDPEN-WIDE SUPPORT OF MISSION

- ❖ Launched two Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Staff Committees, one focusing on community outreach/partnerships and the other on recruitment/hiring/staff development to identify recommendations that promote Midpen’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals and policy.
- ❖ Made significant progress in implementing the *Climate Action Plan*. Continued to purchase offsets for air travel, purchased 100% renewable electricity, utilized renewable diesel, and expanded telecommuting. Emissions were calculated to be 23% below the 2016 baseline, ahead of schedule for the first goal of achieving 20% reductions by 2022.
- ❖ Continued work to prevent, prepare for, and respond to wildland fires in response to the increasing fire threat in California:
 - Contracted with Santa Clara Fire Safe to remove approximately 100 fire-prone eucalyptus trees along Page Mill Road in **Los Trancos Preserve**. Completed a 4-mile fuel break installation on Loma Prieta Ridge in **Sierra Azul Preserve** and Eucalyptus tree removal in **El Sereno Preserve**. Removed six eucalyptus trees near the Sequoias Retirement complex at **Windy Hill Preserve**.
 - Participated in a Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council-led community project for fuel reduction at Summit Road and Bear Creek Road at **Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve**.
 - Attended coordination meetings for the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Forest Health Grant project and participated in budget discussion and planning. Reviewed scope of work and project areas for treatment that includes **Sierra Azul Preserve**.
 - Assessed Midpen’s Fire Suppression Program and developed draft recommendations.
 - Completed the 36-acre Coal Creek fuel break project at **Coal Creek Preserve** with the assistance of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) crew to reduce flammable fuels and improve emergency and evacuation access.
 - Treated fire-prone invasive species at **Picchetti Ranch**, **Rancho San Antonio**, and **Bear Creek Redwoods preserves**.

- In August 2020, Midpen staff and fire agencies located and extinguished four lightning-caused fire starts on Midpen lands before they could grow into larger fires. At the request of CalFire, Midpen sent a team to hold one flank of the CZU Lightning Fire Complex on the Old Haul Road in Pescadero Creek County Park while firefighters fought the front of the fire. Midpen staff held the line and kept the fire from crossing the road and heading toward Skyline Boulevard over a two-week period.
 - Released an interactive mapping application to the public to provide a one-stop resource for those affected by the August 2020 Lightning Complex fires across our region. The CZU-SCU Fire Map web page received over 250,000 visits after its launch and went viral on social media. Staff presented the app at the Santa Clara County GIS Day virtual event in November 2020. This app remains available with real-time fire data and is expected to be a valuable resource for future fire seasons.
 - During the wildfire season, expanded the use of social media to create a real-time information channel for changing conditions, increasing our audience each by 16% and increasing web traffic by 50%.
 - The Board adopted the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program and certified the Programmatic Environmental Impact Report. Conducted significant public outreach to communicate how Midpen's proactive expansion of environmentally sensitive vegetation management promotes healthy, resilient, fire-adapted ecosystems to reduce wildland fire risk and facilitate the response of fire agencies.
 - Completed early and mid-season work to assess and verify plant communities as part of the Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Vegetation mapping project.
 - Reviewed wildland fire fuel GIS data for the Santa Cruz Mountain portion of San Mateo County and posted them to Midpen's ArcGIS Online site.
 - Completed wildland fire pre-plan maps at nine preserves to support emergency response and planning.
 - Mowed and maintained approximately 561 acres of vegetation for fire safety and public access. Maintained defensible space around Midpen-owned structures.
 - Participated in planning for fuel reduction projects along Skyline Boulevard and in the La Honda community in partnership with the San Mateo County FireSafe Council, CalFire, and Resource Conservation District.
- ❖ Selected Laserfiche as Midpen's new electronic document management system and developed the protocols and process for converting paper files into digital files. Inventoried 80% of historic preserve files.
 - ❖ Developed the initial scope for a year-long celebration commemorating accomplishments, milestones, and public support of Midpen's first 50 years. Retained consultant for overall plan and event logistics and separate consultant for documentary video.

- ❖ Continued systems implementation of critical Financial and Operational Sustainability Model Study recommendations to enhance Midpen’s delivery of Measure AA and Vision Plan projects:
 - Continued development of the Work Order and Asset Management System. The Natural Resources department is now integrated into the system, providing staff a streamlined approach for tracking California Department of Fish and Wildlife notifications and department requests for project support.
 - Built a robust GIS database of Midpen's real property interests and land acquisitions, a medley of nearly 900 transactions dating back to 1974. Developed four interactive dashboard applications and a custom PDF reporting tool that summarizes property information, executes queries, and visualizes trends. Built a custom editor application for Real Property staff to manage the database independently and with confidence. This cutting-edge suite of enterprise GIS tools allows staff to centralize institutional knowledge, understand complex land histories, and streamline information sharing about Midpen’s 50-year history of land protection.
 - Gathered business requirements, scoped project, procured Tyler Munis Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and began implementation/configuration. Munis will result in a more robust functionality, introduce numerous efficiencies, expand capabilities, and replace multiple legacy Access databases.
 - Redesigned website structure using equity based Liberty Design Process. Designed new page templates with a refreshed color palette. Migrated and updated 40% of the content for the Website Redesign project. Created social media content strategy to increase outreach and web traffic.
 - Continued to migrate files to SharePoint from network servers. Streamlined several complex workflows in SharePoint, including the Docent Activity development workflow and Land and Facilities uniform orders, and upgraded aging workflows, including Visitor Services time-off requests and service requests.
 - Gathered business requirements, scoped project, and evaluated twelve Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software solutions, for a go-live next fiscal year. The CRM will improve Midpen’s communication with the public. Made significant improvements to Midpen's notification guidelines to streamline the process, increase consistency and efficiency, and improve transparency.
- ❖ Made significant progress to bring new Midpen office facilities online for improved administrative functions and delivery of projects and services:
 - Finalized new design for Administrative Office, received building permits from the City of Los Altos and began construction improvements.
 - Awarded contract to create interpretive elements in public areas of the new facility. Received board approval of scope and initial design scheme. Made significant progress in the design of key elements for final board approval.

- Completed the South Area Field Office construction improvements and moved staff into the building. Completed furniture and technology set-up.
 - Completed fiber-optic connections to Skyline Field Office, Foothills Field Office, and the new South Area Office, greatly improving network bandwidth and quality of service.
- ❖ Implemented Unitrend's disaster recovery system, which allows Midpen to maintain business functions should on-premises servers be destroyed. This is critical in maintaining business continuity at a time when numerous natural, cyber, and technical disruptions exist that have been known to result in very high costs, loss of productivity, loss of irreplaceable records, and damage to IT infrastructure.
 - ❖ Selected, procured, and configured Omnigo Citations Management System. This is a mobile-friendly software that functions in disconnected remote environments to issue citations, track incidents, and provide the ability to query and run analytical reports. Configured and deployed 24 iPhones to ranger staff for use in conjunction with the Omnigo system that will be going live in FY22.
 - ❖ Formed a project team for the Ward Redistricting Plan to develop the timeline, communication plan, and draft webpage to support public outreach and engagement. Consolidated geospatial data and began work with a consultant to develop mapping applications.
 - ❖ Continued to enhance and expand GIS capabilities and datasets, as well as provide departments with more direct access:
 - Released the 2020 Patrol Map Book update that includes a redesigned 55-page weatherized binder and seamless geo PDF map file featuring over 50 authoritative layers and the U.S. National Grid reference system.
 - Released Trail Designer, an advanced mapping application, for Land & Facilities staff to design potential trail alignments and scope opportunities and constraints as part of their feasibility assessment. The app includes slope calculation and visualization tools to convey terrain conditions and allows staff to make informed decision-making, saving Midpen time and money on consultant services.
 - Created an offline-enabled mapping solution to capture detailed physical attributes about Midpen public trails. Developed custom sample datasets and built web mapping applications for editing and visualizing data. Trained staff on GPS equipment and data entry methods using ArcGIS Field Maps. These tasks directly support the Trail Information System Project.
 - Developed editing application for Planning and Visitor Services staff to update the Parking Location GIS dataset with official addresses, IDs, and descriptive names as part of the Parking Area Naming Convention project.

- Mapped grazing infrastructure at the extensive Cloverdale Coastal Ranch property to support the due diligence work for this potential acquisition. Coordinated with POST on securing property access.
 - Digitized and refined important regional trail networks in the enterprise GIS database, including the Saratoga-to-the-Skyline, Skyline-to-the-Sea, Bay Area Ridge Trail, and the Bay Trail. Completed extensive research in coordination with Planning, Real Property, and Public Affairs staff to ensure trail alignments are accurately mapped and correctly attributed. Provided data to the organization through an interactive mapping application that allows users to view the planning status of these regional trail connections.
 - Developed a highly stylized vector tile base map for Midpen’s new website that will provide the public an engaging experience while exploring the Preserve webpages and trail lists.
 - Facilitated the second annual Collector and Asset Subject Matter Expert group session. Provided technical training and completed several asset mapping initiatives using enterprise GIS technology. This cross-department coordination streamlines workflows and empowers field staff, ultimately resulting in a more comprehensive and accurate GIS database.
 - Partnered with Santa Clara County to share costs on county-wide LiDAR and orthoimagery mapping data acquisition. Reviewed consultant deliverables and made high-quality datasets available for future mapping and analysis work.
- ❖ Conducted significant outreach to educate the public on the critical role of conservation grazing in protecting and managing coastal grassland habitat in Midpen preserves.
 - ❖ Prepared Historic Resources Administrative Procedural Manual to collect policy information and internal procedures. Centralized existing Midpen historic resource documentation into a digital library. Retained four historic resource consultants through a competitive on-call contract process to support ongoing projects.
 - ❖ Completed repairs to multiple Midpen-owned residences, some of which house rangers and maintenance staff who provide onsite, after-hours monitoring of the preserves. Work included completion of the Bergman Residences Reconstruction at **Russian Ridge Preserve**.
 - ❖ Completed demolition of fire-damaged structures at the **Thornewood Preserve**.
 - ❖ Completed short-term repairs to the Hawthorns House foundation and temporary roof covering.
 - ❖ Received San Mateo County permits for the Agricultural Workforce Housing project in **La Honda Creek Preserve**. Construction will begin in August 2021.
 - ❖ Repainted the historic Red Barn in lower **La Honda Creek Preserve** and repaired siding to restore its namesake color. Timed project to avoid disturbance of special status bat species. Repaired a small part of deteriorated roofing.
 - ❖ Replaced two patrol vehicles and one mini-excavator.

- ❖ Collaborated with Santa Clara County and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority on the Board of Supervisor's approval of a Zoning Ordinance amendment exempting public agency-led low-intensity, passive recreational use development to streamline the permitting process for low-impact outdoor recreational facilities.
- ❖ In response to COVID-19:
 - 100% of staff were offered a COVID-19 vaccine – resulting in more than 96% of staff being vaccinated Midpen-wide. Continued to vigilantly respond to changes in State, OSHA, and County protocols to protect Midpen from an outbreak.
 - Regularly upgraded Midpen's COVID-19 Health Check application to support evolving health guidelines. Added new workflows for travel restrictions, facilities warnings, and vaccinated employees.
 - Published an article detailing Midpen's seamless pivot to remote work and its COVID-19 Health Check application that keeps Midpen workers safe.
 - Revised and updated the policies to facilitate a reduced carbon footprint of staff and provide more flexibility for the workforce.
 - Coordinated extensively to comply with and educate visitors on public health requirements, monitoring county health orders, developed and installed signage, and coordinated with public health officials and adjacent park agencies to keep preserves open and accessible to the greatest extent possible.
 - Led partner group in creating public service announcements regarding health orders and safe-visit guidelines that aired extensively on local media. Created regional lands story map to guide visitors to open areas for safe outdoor recreation in the early months of the pandemic. Created web page outlining the essential benefits of nature for human health and well-being.
 - Developed extensive safety protocols, processes, procedures, and trainings to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to keep the workforce and the public safe while Midpen continued to work through the pandemic. These efforts included securing and distributing personal protective equipment and collaborating with staff to meet the health guidelines of federal, state, and local authorities.
 - Provided technology tools to staff for greater productivity at home, including increasing bandwidth at the administrative office to improve VPN speeds.
 - Continued to improve electronic signature routing, allowing staff to efficiently route and sign documents digitally and promoting an increase in transparency and accessibility while telecommuting.
 - Maintained the preserve guide map series to ensure continual updates on COVID-19 restrictions, closures, and new features, like wider trails and one-way routes.

AWARDS/GRANTS/RECOGNITION

- ❖ Completed eight successful grant applications totaling \$9,758,539:
 - \$5,000,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Board for the **Highway 17 Crossings Project** to assist with the planning, environmental review, and design phases.
 - \$1,577,000 indirect award from CAL FIRE to the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council for the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Forest Health Project in **Bear Creek Redwoods, Saratoga Gap, Sierra Azul, and Long Ridge Preserves**.
 - \$1,214,590 from the California Department of Parks and Recreation for the Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project at **Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve**.
 - \$1,075,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Board for the El Sereno Keyhole Acquisition Project at **El Sereno Preserve**.
 - \$400,000 from the State Coastal Conservancy to support work under the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program at multiple preserves.
 - \$232,358 indirect award in Proposition 68 funds from the California Conservation Corps for the Coal Creek Fuel Break Project at **Coal Creek Preserve**.
 - \$145,591 from the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery for the Remediation Plan and Ranch Dump Cleanup Project at Madonna Creek Ranch in **Miramontes Ridge Preserve** and the Purisima Upland Site Clean Up and Soil Remediation Project at **Purisima Creek Redwood Preserve**.
 - \$114,000 from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission for the **Highway 35 Multi-use Trail Crossing and Parking/Multimodal Access Study**.
- ❖ At the request of Assemblymember Marc Berman, an \$8M allocation was successfully approved in the FY22 state budget for Midpen’s potential purchase of the Cloverdale Ranch property. In addition, Proposition 68 State Parks and Recreation Department’s Proposition 68 Recreational Infrastructure Revenue Enhancement Program allocated Midpen \$1,482,282 which may also support the possible acquisition of the Cloverdale Ranch property.
- ❖ The Grantmaking program distributed \$37,000 to three organizations in support of local environmental education programs.
- ❖ Received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the fifth year in a row.
- ❖ Received the Operating Budget – Excellence Award from the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers for the third time in a row.
- ❖ Received the Outstanding Financial Reporting Award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for the Consolidated Annual Financial Report (third year) and Popular Annual Financial Report (second year).

- ❖ Awarded first place for the Public Outreach Award from the Northern Section California Chapter American Planning Association for La Honda Public Access Working Group public engagement work.
- ❖ Received a medal from Supervisor Joe Simitian from the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for Midpen’s exemplary service to provide a safe outdoor outlet for the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ Honored by California State Senator Josh Becker as a “Senate District 13 Community Champion” for efforts during the pandemic.
- ❖ Awarded the 2020 Municipal Information Systems Association of California (MISAC) prestigious Technology Innovation Award for the COVID-19 Health Check Application. This is a statewide competition (second year).

FRONT COVER PHOTO CREDITS

Top (L to R): Borel Hill by Midpen; People on Top of Windy Hill by Rachel Pandipati; Fantastic Mr. Fox by Chris Perry
Bottom (L to R): Butterfly by Midpen; Wild Iris by Dean Little; Last Light by Jim Mosher.