COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

DATE: November 9, 2026

TO: Agricultural Advisory Committee

FROM: Michael Schaller, Planning Staff, 628/222-3108

SUBJECT: Consideration of a Coastal Development Permit and Planned Agricultural Development Permit, pursuant to Section 8.252.050 and 8.106.040 of the County Ordinance Code to permit the implementation of a limited interim public access plan for hiking on existing ranch roads in two locations ("Butano Farms" and High Hill") in the northern area of Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve, including improvements to allow permit parking. The subject property is located directly south of the Town of Pescadero, in the unincorporated south coast area of San Mateo County. This project is appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

County File Number: PLN2026-00228 (MPROSD)

PROPOSAL

The applicant, MidPeninsula Regional Open Space District (MidPen) is requesting a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and Planned Agricultural Development Permit (PAD) to authorize the implementation of a limited interim public access plan for hiking on existing ranch roads in two locations ("Butano Farms" and High Hill") in the northern area of Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve. The proposed Butano Farms Loop trail will originate from a new parking area off of Pescadero Creek Road and use existing ranch roads that pass by one fenced agriculture pond (Butano Farms Pond) and crosses one unnamed drainage. This loop will be approximately three miles in length and will utilize existing ranch roads.

Parking for this trail will be constructed at an existing corral on the south side of Pescadero Creek Road, approximately 900 feet west of Cloverdale Road. The corral is used approximately two times per year by the current grazing tenant to load/unload cattle. The proposed parking area will not impair the functionality of the corral, and the overall corral area would be expanded for improved circulation. To minimize cattle and vehicle conflicts, the applicant will replace and reconfigure the existing corral fencing with standard galvanized steel corral fencing/panels. The revised site layout will allow parking for up to 10 vehicles within an approximately 4,200 sq. ft. area, with the remaining space (2,100 sq. ft.) in the corral open for cattle on a day-to-day basis. One staff parking space will also be provided outside of the corral behind the District gate. Natural pervious surfacing, such as gravel, will be used as the parking surface material. Implementation of the proposed parking improvements at Butano Farms may require

minor grading, totaling approximately 60 cubic yards of earthwork. This will allow for all-season access and prevent sediment tracking into the County right-of-way. The entire corral will still be available for cattle operations when needed by the grazing tenant, and on those days, the applicant will suspend issuance of permits for parking and restrict public access on this trail. In addition, permits will also be suspended during red flag fire danger days in conformance with MidPen's Coastside Service Plan.

The High Hill trail will begin at a new parking area off of Bean Hollow Road and utilize existing ranch roads until reaching the scenic vista point at High Hill. The parking area will hold up to 10 vehicles and will be located along an existing ranch road immediately inside the Preserve entrance gate on the east side of Bean Hollow Road, approximately 1-mile south of Pescadero Creek Road. The proposed parking area would be approximately 6,590 square feet. Proposed fencing improvements will prevent cattle from interfacing with vehicles and facilitate grazing tenant access to an existing corral adjacent to the interim parking area. To allow for all-season access and prevent sediment tracking into the County right-of-way, gravel will be used as the parking surface material. Implementation of the proposed parking improvements at High Hill may require minor grading, totaling approximately 74 cubic yards of earthwork.

Parking and trail access at both locations will be by permit only. Informational and regulatory signage will be installed at each parking location to indicate parking spaces and support conservation grazing operations. Trail use will be limited to on-trail hiking on designated existing ranch roads, and parking areas and trail routes will be patrolled by MidPen Rangers. Permittees will be required to stay on the designated trails. This regulation will be listed on the permit, called out on the public map, and on signage posted at trailheads and, as necessary, locations along the trails.

DECISION MAKER

Planning Commission.

QUESTIONS FOR THE AGRICULURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FOR Planned Agricultural Development (PAD):

1. Will the project have any negative effect on surrounding agricultural uses? If so, can any conditions of approval be recommended to minimize any such impact?

2. What position do you recommend that the Planning staff take with respect to the application for this project?

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: Michael Schaller, Senior Planner

Owner/Applicant: MidPeninsula Regional Open Space District (MPROSD)

Location: Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve, immediately south of the Town of Pescadero.

APN(s): 086-270-050, 086-080-070, -020, and -060.

Parcel Size: The entire preserve is 846 acres in size.

Existing Zoning: Planned Agricultural Development (PAD)

General Plan Designation: Agriculture

Local Coastal Plan Designation: Agriculture

Williamson Act: N/A

Existing Land Use: Open Space/Ranchland

Water Supply: N/A

Sewage Disposal: N/A

Flood Zone: Portions of the Preserve are in Flood Zone A (Areas of 100 Year Flood Hazard, No Base Flood Elevations Determined), FEMA Community Panel 06081C-0432E, Effective Date: October 16, 2012. However, no components of the proposed project will occur in this area.

Environmental Evaluation: The project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15304 (*Minor Alterations to Land*) and 15305 (*Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations*). The project will involve minor grading for the two parking areas and placement of a limited amount of signage. The applicant is also proposing to restrict access to the Preserve and trails through a permitting process that is designed to limit the impact of visitors upon biotic and agricultural resources in the Preserve.

Setting: The Preserve is located within MidPen conservation grazing units and vegetation cover is comprised of grassland and shrubs. Both proposed interim parking areas are in flat disturbed locations (e.g., existing corral and ranch road). The proposed hiking routes along existing ranch roads range between flat to hilly terrain. No water bodies are located within the area of disturbance for the project. The Butano Farms hiking route passes by a fenced agriculture pond (Butano Farms Pond). Existing

development in the proposed project area consists of grazing infrastructure, including gravel ranch roads, corrals, fencing, automatic gates, storage containers, water tanks and troughs, and an agriculture pond.

Chronology:

Date		Action
June 2023	-	MidPen purchases the Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties from Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), creating the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Cloverdale Ranch or Preserve).
December 2024	-	MidPen staff provided an overview of the Project to the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council (PMAC) and returned to PMAC with a status update in January 2026.
February 2026	-	MidPen staff met on-site with representatives of the San Mateo County Farm Bureau for consultation on the Project.
June 2026	-	Application for permits submitted to County Planning.

Will the project be visible from a public road?

The proposed parking areas will be visible from adjacent public roads. However, no large structures are proposed at either parking lot. The visual impacts of the proposed improvements will be minimal.

Will any habitat or vegetation need to be removed for the project?

Both proposed parking areas contain only non-native grasslands. No habitat has been identified at either location. The existing ranch roads that will be used as trails also do not contain any identified habitat.

Is there prime soil on the project site?

Yes. Prime soil has been identified in portions of the preserve, specifically in the area off of Bean Hollow Road where the High Hill parking area will be located.

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

Planning staff has reviewed this proposal and has concluded the following:

1. Compliance with Local Coastal Program (LCP) Policies:

Policy 5.5 – (*Permitted Uses on Prime Agricultural Lands Designated as Agriculture*). This policy conditionally permits public recreation and shoreline access trails, subject to the issuance of a Coastal Development Permit. In this instance, the applicant is requesting the necessary Coastal Development Permit.

Policy 5.8 – (*Conversion of Prime Agricultural Land Designated as Agriculture*). This policy prohibits the conversion of prime agricultural land within a parcel to a conditionally permitted use unless it can be demonstrated that:

a. *No alternative site exists for the use*;

The location of the High Hill parking area is dictated by the location of the existing ranch roads which will be utilized for public access. The proposed parking area has historically been used for access and parking of farm vehicles. Conversion of this area to a non-agricultural use preceded the adoption of the County's Local Coastal Program.

b. *Clearly defined buffer areas are provided between agricultural and non-agricultural uses*;

The lands of the Cloverdale Preserve are used for cattle grazing. Consistent with MidPen practice at other preserves, the cattle will continue to be free roaming. It will be the responsibility of hikers using the Preserve's trails to remain on-trail and avoid conflicts with the grazing cattle.

c. *The productivity of any adjacent agricultural land will not be diminished*;

Since 2022, MidPen has run a number of docent led hikes within the Preserve. There is no evidence at this time to suggest that the limited number of permitted hikers that would utilize the Preserve (if this CDP is approved) will have a significant impact upon adjacent agricultural lands.

d. *Public service and facility expansions and permitted uses will not impair agricultural viability, including by increased assessment costs or degraded air and water quality*.

No new public services or facility expansions are proposed as part of this project. There is no evidence to suggest that this limited passive recreation proposed will impair agricultural viability on surrounding lands.

2. Compliance with Planned Agricultural District (PAD) Regulations:

Chapter 8.106.040 – (*Uses Permitted Subject To The Issuance Of A Planned Agricultural Permit*). As discussed above, public recreation/shoreline access trails are a conditionally permitted use on all agriculturally zoned lands in the Coastal Zone.

Chapter 8.106.060 – (*Substantive Criteria For Issuance Of A Planned Agricultural Permit*).

B. General Criteria

1. *The encroachment of all development upon land which is suitable for agricultural use shall be minimized*.

As discussed previously, the locations of the proposed parking areas are dictated by the locations of the existing ranch roads which will be utilized for public access. The size of each parking area has been minimized to only that which is needed for a limited number of parking spaces. Additionally, each area will continue to function as staging areas for the on-going grazing operations, thus not eliminating the use of these areas for agriculture.

2. *All development permitted on a site shall be clustered*.

There will be minimal physical development required to create the parking areas and that development that will occur will be clustered in the two parking areas (which are already developed as staging areas for the on-going grazing operation).

3. *Every project shall conform to the Development Review Criteria contained in Chapter 20A.2 of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code.*

The project has been reviewed against these criteria. The project complies with the site design criteria by minimizing alterations to the topography and vegetation of the site as much as possible. The development does not significantly encroach on any sensitive habitats, nor will it create any lasting noise or dust producing impacts.

C. Criteria for the Conversion of Prime Agricultural Lands

1. General Criteria

See discussion above under LCP Policy 5.8.

D. Criteria for the Conversion of Lands Suitable for Agriculture and Other Lands

1. *All agriculturally unsuitable lands on the parcel have been developed or determined to be undevelopable.*

The portion of the project site where the Butano Farms parking area will be located is not designated as prime soils on the San Mateo County Soil Survey but instead falls within the definition of "Lands Suitable for Agriculture". There are no areas in the lower portions of the preserve that could not be used for grazing (which currently occurs on site). Therefore, the constraints of the parcel preclude development of "unsuitable" lands.

2. *Continued or renewed agricultural use of the soils is not feasible as defined by Section 30108 of the Coastal Act.*

The applicant currently leases the lands of the Preserve for a cattle grazing operation and intends to have this continue into the future. Based upon past experience, there is no reason to believe that continued cattle grazing cannot continue alongside the proposed low intensity recreational use of the Preserve.

3. *Clearly defined buffer areas are developed between agricultural and non-agricultural uses.*

The lands of the Cloverdale Preserve are used for cattle grazing. Consistent with MidPen practice at other preserves, the cattle will continue to be free roaming. It will be the responsibility of hikers using the Preserve's trails to remain on-trail and avoid conflicts with the grazing cattle.

4. *The productivity of any adjacent agricultural lands is not diminished.*

Since 2022, MidPen has run a number of docent led hikes within the Preserve. There is no evidence at this time to suggest that the limited number of permitted hikers that would utilize the Preserve (if this CDP is approved) will have a significant impact upon adjacent agricultural lands.

5. *Public service and facility expansions and permitted uses do not impair agricultural viability, including by increased assessment costs or degraded air and water quality.*

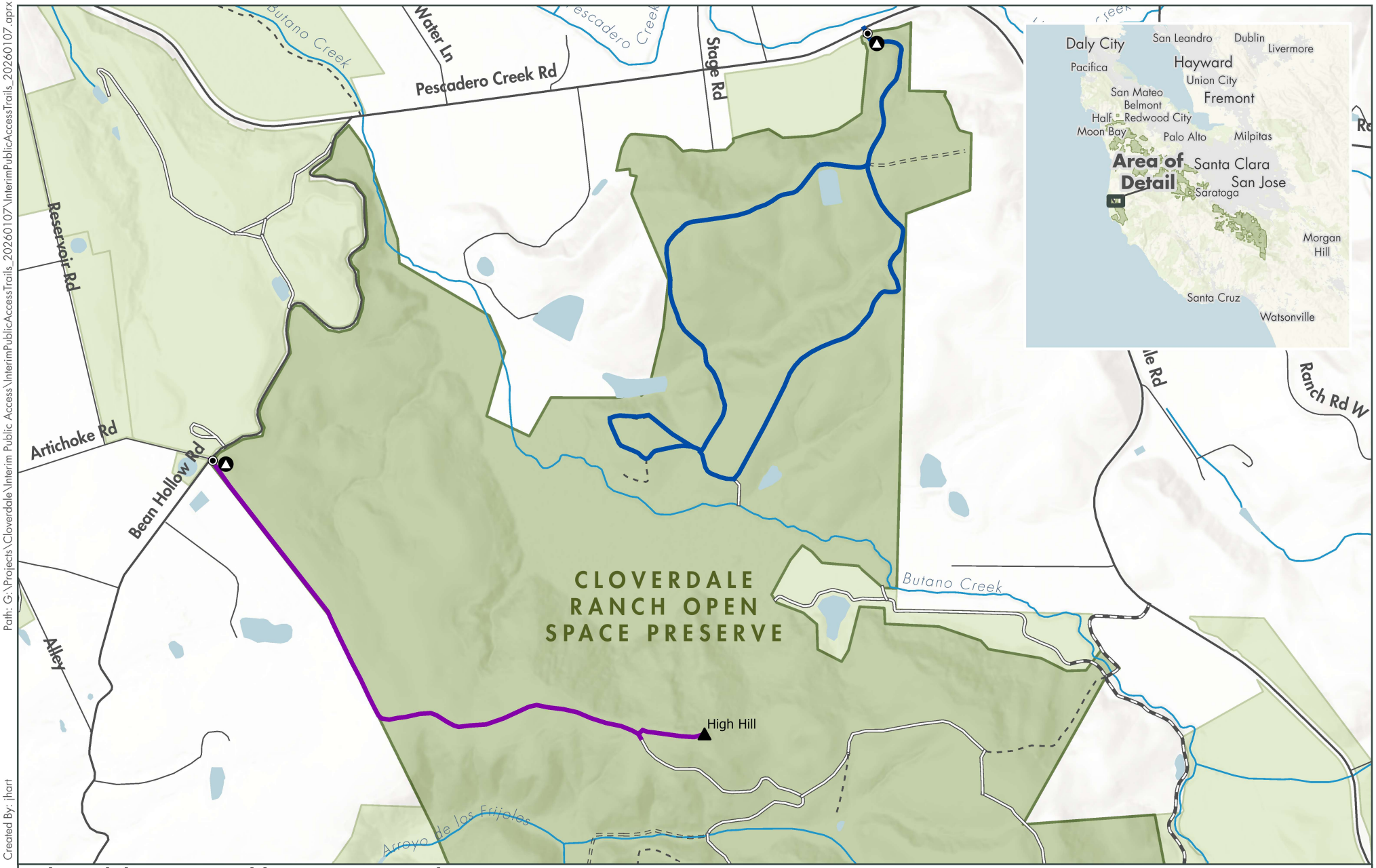
No new public services or facility expansions are proposed as part of this project. There is no evidence to suggest that this limited passive recreation will impair agricultural viability on surrounding lands.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Overall Site Plan
B. Parking Areas Site Plan
C. Site Photos
D. Supporting Information

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ATTACHMENT A



Path: G:\Projects\Cloverdale\Interim Public Access\InterimPublicAccessTrails_20260107\InterimPublicAccessTrails_20260107.aprx

Created By: ihart

Cloverdale Interim Public Access: Limited Permit Access

- Preserve Boundary
- Other Open Space
- Waterbody
- Stream
- Interim Staging Area (Permit Only)
- Gate

Trails

- Paved Road
- Unpaved All-Season Road
- Unpaved Seasonal Road
- Trail
- Abandoned / Unamaintained Trail
- Abandoned / Unmaintained Road

Phase 3 Interim Public Access Trails (Hiking Only)

- High Hill Out & Back
- Butano Farms Loop

Miles 0 0.25 0.5

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
(Midpen)
2/11/2026

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.

County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department

ATTACHMENT B



0 10 20 30 40 ft

1"=10'-0" (22"X34")

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SCALE:1"=10'-0"

DATE: 5/13/2026

CLOVERDALE INTERIM PUBLIC ACCESS

BUTANO FARMS - EXISTING CONDITIONS

PESCADERO CREEK ROAD

SAN MATEO COUNTY R.O.W.

(N) AUTOMATIC GATE

(N) BIKE RACKS

(N) 20' DOUBLE LEAF GATE

((N) STAFF PARKING

1

(N) 12' GATE & PEDESTRIAN GATE

(N) 10' GATE

(N) 8' GATE

5

(N) INTERIM PARKING AREA; *NATURAL SURFACING TBD*

(N) GRAZING FENCING; TYP.

(N) LOADING ALLEY

5

(N) 20' DOUBLE LEAF GATE

(E) GRAVEL ROAD

(N) 10' GATE

(E) POST EASEMENT AREA

(N) ALL SEASON CORRAL TO REMAIN

(N) WATER TROUGH

CORRAL EXPANSION AREA

LEGEND

PRESERVE BOUNDARY	
PROPOSED FENCE	
EXISTING FENCE	
PROPOSED GATE	

SUMMARY TABLE

	PROPOSED
STANDARD PARKING SPACES	10
STAFF PARKING SPACES	1
TOTAL	11

0 10 20 30 40 ft

1"=10'-0" (22"X34")

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SCALE:1"=10'-0"

DATE: 5/13/2026

CLOVERDALE INTERIM PUBLIC ACCESS

BUTANO FARMS - PROPOSED CONDITIONS



MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SCALE:1"=30'-0"

DATE: 5/13/2026

CLOVERDALE INTERIM PUBLIC ACCESS

HIGH HILL PARKING - EXISTING CONDITIONS



MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

SCALE:1"=30'-0" | DATE: 5/13/2026

CLOVERDALE INTERIM PUBLIC ACCESS

HIGH HILL - PROPOSED CONDITIONS

County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department

ATTACHMENT C



Photo 1: Butano Farms – proposed interim parking area from Pescadero Creek Road.



Photo 2: Butano Farms loop (existing ranch road).



Photo 3: Butano Farms (existing ranch road).



Photo 4: View from the Butano Farms Loop trail.



Photo 5: Existing corral adjacent to the Butano Farms Loop trail.



Photo 6: Butano Farms Pond (adjacent to Butano Farms Loop trail).



Photo 7: Butano Farms loop trail.



Photo 8: High Hill - proposed interim parking area from Bean Hollow Road



Photo 9: High Hill (existing ranch road).



Photo 10: High Hill (existing ranch roads).



Photo 11: View from Vista point at top of High Hill.

County of San Mateo - Planning and Building Department

ATTACHMENT D

Planning Permit Application Form Attachment

List all elements of proposed project: (e.g. access, size and location, primary and accessory structures, well, septic, tank)

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) is proposing to allow limited interim access for hiking on existing ranch roads in two locations ("Butano Farms" and High Hill") in the northern area of Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Preserve). Midpen proposes minimal site improvements to allow permit parking and enhancements to existing ranching infrastructure for the conservation grazing program. The interim public access would utilize existing ranch roads within the Butano Farms area with access from Pescadero Creek Road and High Hill area from Bean Hollow Road. Authorized vehicles operating under a Midpen permit would enter through an existing locked gate from the respective roadway and park at a designated interim parking area. Hikers would then proceed on foot from the parking areas to access the ranch road/trail.

Butano Farms

Permit access from the *Butano Farms* location would allow members of the public to hike an approximately 3-mile loop on existing ranch roads. Parking for up to 10 vehicles in the *Butano Farms* location would be located within an existing 6,300 square feet (sf.) corral located behind District gate and fencing on the south side of Pescadero Creek Road, approximately 900 ft. west of Cloverdale Road. The corral is used approximately two times per year by the current grazing tenant to load/unload cattle. Most loading and unloading operations within the grazing lease area occur at two other corrals on the property that were recently replaced (with new corrals) in 2024 and 2025. The proposed parking area would not impair the functionality of the corral, and the overall corral area would be expanded for improved circulation.

To minimize cattle and vehicle conflicts, Midpen would replace and reconfigure the existing corral fencing with standard galvanized steel corral fencing/panels. The revised site layout will allow parking within an approximately 4,200 sf. area, with the remaining space (2,100 sf.) in the corral open for cattle on a day-to-day basis. One (1) staff parking space would also be provided outside of the corral behind the District gate. Natural pervious surfacing, such as gravel, would be used as the parking surface material. Implementation of the proposed parking improvements at Butano Farms may require minor grading, totaling approximately 60 cubic yards of earthwork. This would allow for all-season access and prevent sediment tracking into the County right-of-way.

Improvements for cattle operations would include relocation of an existing water trough to an improved location within the corral and reconfiguration of the corral to improve cattle loading and unloading operations. The entire corral would still be available for cattle operations when needed by the grazing tenant, and on those days, Midpen would suspend issuance of permits for parking and restrict public access on this trail. In addition, permits will also be suspended during red flag fire danger days in conforming with Midpen's Coastside Service Plan, associated Environmental Impact Report and

agreement with the County for managing public access in the Coastside Protection Area. Additionally, the south end of the corral is proposed to be expanded by 550 sf. to increase the space for cattle on a day-to-day basis to 2,650 sf.; bringing the total size of the corral to 6,850 square feet.

High Hill Out & Back

Interim permit parking at the *High Hill* area for up to 10 vehicles would be located along the existing ranch road immediately inside the Preserve entrance gate on the east side of Bean Hollow Road, approximately 1-mile south of Pescadero Creek Road. The proposed parking area would be approximately 6,590 square feet. Proposed fencing improvements would prevent cattle from interfacing with vehicles and facilitate grazing tenant access to an existing corral adjacent to the interim parking area. To allow for all-season access and prevent sediment tracking into the County right-of-way, natural pervious surface, such as gravel, would be used as the parking surface material. Implementation of the proposed parking improvements at High Hill may require minor grading, totaling approximately 74 cubic yards of earthwork. From the proposed parking area, the public could reach the High Hill scenic vista point via a 1.25-mile hike along an existing ranch road, creating a 2.5-mile round trip hike.

No impervious surfaces are proposed at either parking location. Informational and regulatory signage would be installed at each parking location to indicate parking spaces and support conservation grazing operations. Trail use will be limited to on-trail hiking on designated existing ranch roads, and parking areas and trail routes would be patrolled by Midpen Rangers. Permittees will be required to stay on the designated trails. This regulation will be listed on the permit, called out on the public map, and on signage posted at trailheads and, as necessary, locations along the trails.

Describe Existing Site Conditions/Features (e.g. topography, water bodies, vegetation):

The proposed project is located within Midpen conservation grazing units and vegetation cover is comprised of grassland and shrubs. Both proposed interim parking areas are in flat disturbed locations (e.g., existing corral and ranch road). The proposed hiking routes along existing ranch roads range between flat to hilly terrain. No water bodies are located within the area of disturbance for the project. The Butano Farms hiking route passes by a fenced agriculture pond (Butano Farms Pond).

Describe Existing Structures and/or Development:

Existing development in the proposed project area consists of grazing infrastructure, including gravel ranch roads, corrals, fencing, automatic gates, storage containers, water tanks and troughs, and an agriculture pond.

Cloverdale Ranch Interim Public Access Supporting Statement

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (Midpen) mission is 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. On the San Mateo County Coastside, the mission is expanded to acquire and preserve 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.

In 2003, the Midpen Board of Directors approved the Service Plan for the San Mateo Coastal Annexation Area (Service Plan), which summarizes the services provided and policies that apply to Midpen's activities within the Coastside Protection Area. The proposed project supports Midpen's Coastside mission and the Service Plan by providing low-intensity recreation opportunities for the public while continuing to foster existing agriculture operations and minimize conflicts with non-agricultural uses.

In 2022, the Midpen Board of Directors (Board) approved the purchase of Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties from Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), creating the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (Cloverdale Ranch or Preserve). As part of the Coastside outreach for the Cloverdale Ranch acquisition, the community expressed interest in near-term opportunities for public access to the property. To support this interest, Midpen offered a three-phased interim public access approach that included two community field days (Phase 1), docent-led hikes (Phase 2), and limited hiking-only access to the Preserve via a Midpen-issued day use permit (Phase 3). Phases 1 and 2 have been implemented, and Phase 3 would be achieved through the proposed project. Permit access would include limited access to an approximately 3-mile Butano Farms Loop trail and 1.25-mile High Hill trail that will be operated on an interim basis until Midpen develops a comprehensive use and management plan for public access at Cloverdale Ranch. Future Midpen Board approval of a comprehensive use and management plan and associated environmental review would be needed prior to implementing long-term public access at the Preserve.

In addition to public outreach conducted for the purchase of Cloverdale Ranch, Midpen staff have engaged with stakeholders and the community over the past 18 months related to Phase 3 of the interim public access plan (the proposed project), as summarized below:

- Midpen staff provided an overview of the Project to the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council (PMAC) in December 2024 and returned to PMAC with a status update in January 2026.
- In February 2026, Midpen staff met on-site with representatives of the San Mateo County Farm Bureau for consultation on the Project.
- In March 2026, Midpen staff provided a project status update to the Midpen Board of Directors at their public meeting held on the Coastside in Half Moon Bay.
- Midpen staff have been coordinating with the grazing tenant of the Butano Farms Grazing Unit to ensure the interim public access (hiking) does not impact

conservation grazing operations, and that the proposed infrastructure enhancements support cattle operations.

Access will be managed through a digital permitting system. Interested visitors may apply via the Midpen website (https://www.openspace.org/where-to-go/permits) by completing a standardized form. No fees would be charged for permits. Upon submission, applicants would receive their one-day permit along with pertinent site information. Midpen anticipates issuing approximately 5 to 10 permits on weekdays and approximately 12 to 18 permits on the weekends. The maximum number of permits in one day that could be issued for parking would be 20 (10 permits at the *Butano Farms* parking area and 10 permits at the *High Hill* parking area). Issuance of permits would be temporarily suspended on days in which there are active cattle operations (e.g., loading and unloading) taking place in our adjacent to the parking areas. In addition, permits will also be suspended during red flag fire danger days in conforming with Midpen's Coastside Service Plan, associated Environmental Impact Report and agreement with the County for managing public access in the Coastside Protection Area. Copies of the Service Plan and EIR (Draft and Final EIR) are available online at: Coastside Protection | Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.