

Regional Open Space Study



Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

330 Distel Circle • Los Altos, California 94022-1404

Phone: (650) 691-1200 Fax: (650) 691-0485

E-mail: mrostd@openspace.org Web Site: www.openspace.org



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Overview of the Regional Open Space Study

Study Definition

The Regional Open Space Study is intended to illustrate a concept of what may be desirable as a future greenbelt on the peninsula. The study is not intended as a commitment to fund, approve, or implement any specific acquisitions or improvements. It is a tool for ongoing study and discussion as the District pursues its open space preservation mission. The study area encompasses the entire peninsula south of San Francisco, including lands outside of the District's boundaries, in order to show the total context for the District's activities.

The map will be available on an ongoing basis for review and comment and will be reexamined and revised based on progress, comments, and changing conditions. It is a tool for communication with the public and other agencies about ideas for open space preservation and public access.

Relationship of the District's Master Plan and Regional Open Space Study

To guide the District's open space preservation efforts, the District produces a Master Plan and a Regional Open Space Study. The Master Plan sets forth guidelines for District acquisitions and shows the relative desirability of potential open space land acquisitions. The Regional Open Space Study shows the general extent of lands and public access improvements existing, under active consideration, or under conceptual study, to complete the District's mission.

Both documents are subject to periodic review and modification by the Board of Directors through a public process. The Regional Open Space Study is subject to periodic technical updates. Both documents are submitted to the counties, cities, and various land conservation-oriented local, state, and federal agencies and organizations for review and comment in order to encourage coordination with their planning and policies.

Background

The concept of the Regional Open Space Study originated at a January, 1994 Board of Directors' workshop on District goals and objectives. After background research and preparations, a two-year study process was conducted in 1996 and 1997, coinciding with the District's 25th anniversary. The study's objectives were to 1) gather ideas and opinions about the District's policies and future plans through an extensive series of meetings with the public and other agencies, 2) review and update the Basic Policy (the "constitution" of the District) and draft a mission statement, and 3) prepare a map showing the existing and potential future open space lands and facilities on the San Francisco peninsula — a vision of the future greenbelt that is the District's mission.

During 1998, another phase of the project was completed. This phase evaluated the financial implications of the District's portion of the envisioned future greenbelt.

Public Participation

The public participation process for the Regional Open Space Study took place in several stages. Public notice of workshops and meetings included news releases, display advertisements, and notice to people who had been interested in previous District planning efforts.

In 1996, public workshops and meetings were held to solicit input on revision of the Basic Policy, with the objective of updating the policy to more accurately reflect current circumstances and operating procedures. Significant revisions were made and a new Mission Statement was created as a result of the workshops. These were set aside as a draft while the map study process and additional public workshops were completed.

In early 1997, the District held workshops with the staff of local agencies and organizations involved with or concerned about parks and open space planning. Ideas for how the process should be conducted and base information for the study were collected. The next phase was a series of four widely-noticed region-



Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

Features and Key Points of the Regional Open Space Study Map

Lands

Existing protected open space land. This is shown in different colors according to the type of agency or organization that owns and manages the land.

Some existing open space lands are not open to the public, including some publicly-owned lands and some lands where existing trails are shown. Please check with specific park or preserve managers and see their published maps regarding access.

Horizontal green stripes indicate an existing open space easement or part-ownership interest. The color indicates the type of agency or organization owning the easement or interest. These easements or interests may be over private land or other types of public or private open space, which show as wider stripes.

Lands worth considering for open space protection. Generally, these lands are large undeveloped holdings that should be studied as part of a potential future regional greenbelt, and are shown as vertical green stripes.

These lands are not necessarily proposed for acquisition — they are identified only for study regarding potential future preservation.

Many other agencies and organizations are involved in open space protection on the peninsula in addition to the District. They all may have future roles in protecting and managing additional open space lands.

Land preservation may include purchase of fee ownership, conservation or trail easements, life estates, inholdings, or other arrangements on a willing seller basis.

The District and other open space protection agencies and organizations are typically interested in working with owners so they can continue to live, farm, and/or ranch on the property. Such arrangements may include limits on public access.

The District's power of eminent domain is used only rarely, in response to direct threat of major development, or for tax benefit to the sellers, in strict accordance with the District's Land Acquisition Policies.

The District does not consider use of eminent domain as a means of purchasing land unless the property concerned is an open space parcel of critical importance or is under some dire emergency, such as immediate destruction of natural resources, or clearing for development purposes. Even under such urgent circumstances, however, eminent domain would still be used only as a last resort. The District would continue to use negotiation as its primary tool in purchasing land.

Urban/Subdivided Land. Areas that are developed and/or subdivided to an extent that they are not practical to consider for potential large-scale open space preservation. These lands are shown as gray.

Facilities

The map attempts to show all existing major facilities of the types noted below. Potential facilities shown include some on existing public land, some that may be part of already-adopted plans, and some shown for discussion purposes only (on private land). Existing facilities are shown in black and potential facilities are shown in red. Several stages of further planning, public review, and decision-making would be required before these "concept" facilities could reach the status of a plan.

Field Office. Currently, the District has two major field office/shop facilities, at Rancho San Antonio and Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserves, to serve the Foothills and Skyline areas, respectively. Other existing county or state ranger facilities are also shown. The potential future field offices shown may be regional substations — not necessarily major office/shop complexes.

Lands and Facilities on Regional Open Space Study Map	Current (3/21/86)	Potential Additional	Total
Lands managed by the District	42,490 acres protected (37,639 acres in preserves)	34,647 acres (30,856 acres in preserves*)	77,137 acres protected (68,495 acres in preserves*)
Other protected open space land contiguous to District	31,516 acres	5,227	36,743
Trails managed by the District	248 miles	354 miles	602 miles
Trails managed by others	(estimate not available)	35 miles	(estimate not available)
Staging areas managed by the District	13	20	33
Staging areas managed by others	(estimate not available)	5	(estimate not available)

*Assuming same proportion as current

Financial Implications of the Study

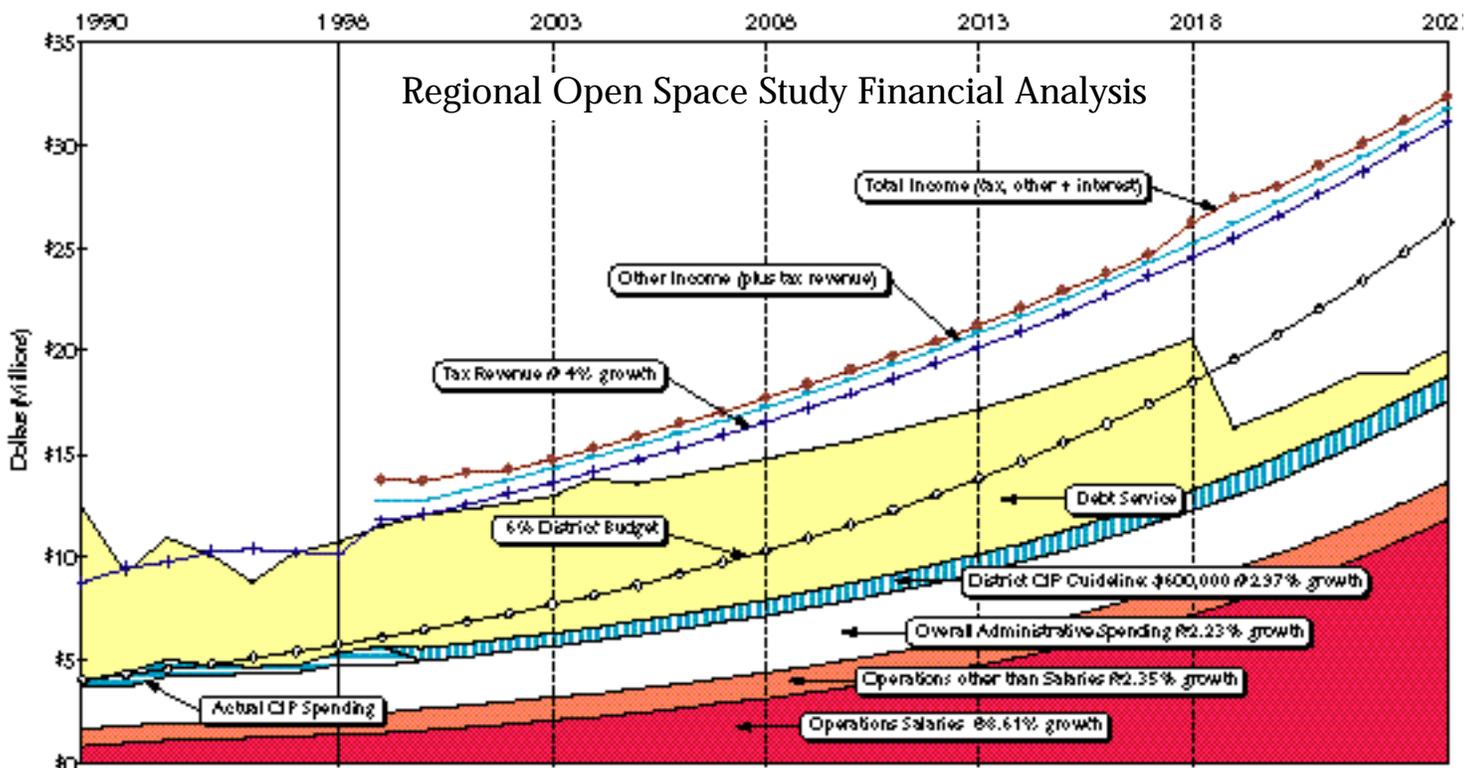
One of the key objectives of the Regional Open Space Study was to examine the financial implications of the potential future regional greenbelt. To accomplish this, the lands and facilities for the assumed District and "others" portions of the envisioned greenbelt were quantified and roughly estimated based on past and current costs for acquisition, improvement, and management. (The portion of the potential lands and facilities that would be the District's vs. "others" is not delineated on the map - only assumed in terms of quantities).

This estimate is based on many assumptions, and should only be considered as one of many possible study scenarios. Estimates were not available for some items, such as trails or staging areas managed by other agencies.

Based on recent trends in revenue and spending, a simple graphic model was created of the District's

financial future as it works to implement its part of the envisioned greenbelt. The graph indicates that the District cannot afford to complete and manage its assumed portion of the envisioned greenbelt over the next 25 years without substantial additional funding. The actual "funding gap" between current and projected financial resources and the funding needed to complete the greenbelt depends on a number of factors, some of which can be controlled or predicted, such as spending and debt service, and others that cannot be controlled or predicted, such as inflation in prices and tax revenue rates or allocations.

No direct decision-making is anticipated based on the financial model. Like the study map, the financial model is a tool for further study as the District pursues its open space preservation mission, and as conditions and near-term objectives evolve.





Ravenswood Open Space Preserve

Programs

The docent program currently includes over 120 active volunteer docents who lead hikes and tours on the preserves. The volunteer program provides an opportunity for people to donate their time and energy to a variety of field and office projects.

Activities

The District offers nearly 250 miles of trails that range from gentle paths to rugged terrain. Bicycles are permitted on a number of trails, and there are also many trails where horseback riders are welcome.

For More District Information

To get on the District's quarterly newsletter mailing list, receive preserve trail maps, order an annual subscription to Board meeting agendas and minutes, or obtain further information on any of the District's preserves or programs, please call (650) 691-1200. Our address is 330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, CA 94022-01404. You may send electronic mail to <mrosd@openspace.org>.

Trail maps are usually available at major trailheads, or may be requested in advance from the District. Maps and other information may be obtained on the District's website at <www.openspace.org>.

Other documents guiding the District's activities are available to the public upon request, including Basic Policies, Trail Use Policies, Trail Use Guidelines and Mitigation Measures, Resource Management Policies, and Use & Management Plans.

The District Speakers Bureau provides guest speakers for service organizations, homeowners groups, business clubs, or other associations within any of the District's 16 cities. Also available is a free-standing photo display for use at special events.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District gratefully accepts contributions to assist in its mission of preserving unspoiled and natural land for future generations. Donations are tax-deductible.

To help with its ongoing efforts to preserve open space, the District also appreciates in-kind contributions of equipment, materials, and professional services.