

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
AGRICULTURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural Producers and Stakeholders Survey

April 2022

Background:

Since 2005, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) has been preserving open space and agricultural land in coastal San Mateo County to protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character of the region, promote viable agricultural land use and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. Midpen has primarily carried out this work through our Conservation Grazing Program by integrating conservation grazing operations into land management activities on Midpen lands to preserve the biodiversity of grassland habitats and reduce fuels loads and fire risk while sustaining the local agricultural heritage of the coastside. Midpen also works collaboratively with many partners to support agricultural preservation in the region. These diverse partnerships include local producers, Peninsula Open Space Trust, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Agriculture Commissioner's office among many others. The San Mateo Resource Conservation District helps farmers with technical expertise and connects them to funding sources for infrastructure improvements to keep farming viable while protecting the environment. In addition, they host the county Agriculture Ombudsperson to help farmers navigate county permitting. Peninsula Open Space Trust preserves active agriculture operations through the purchase of fee title land or easements through its Farmland Futures Initiative. POST places agriculture conservation easements on intensive agriculture properties, such as row crop farmlands, to keep lands in agriculture and prevent their conversion to other uses. Midpen has largely focused its work in coastal San Mateo County on rangelands (grazing lands) and associated upland habitats or riparian corridors, generally leaving cultivated (row crop) agricultural lands to private ownership and management.

Midpen is currently reviewing and refining its policies that guide its agricultural role in the region. We seek your input! Please take a moment to fill out this survey to help us better understand your perspective on our agricultural work on the San Mateo County coast. We will also hold a workshop in mid- April to gather more feedback. We invite you to participate in both this survey and the workshop and appreciate your thoughts. **Please complete this survey by Tuesday May 10, 2022.** If you have other comments, concerns or questions, please contact Lewis Reed at lreed@openaspace.org or (650) 772-3634.

JUNE 2022 Update: Surveys may still be completed and submitted to Lewis Reed (email above); or mailed to Midpen Regional Open Space District, Attn: Lewis Reed, 5050 El Camino Real, Los Altos, CA 94022. The Survey can also be found online here:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QN5D5YR>

Spanish: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MGWR7RY>

SURVEY:

- 1) Midpen is interested in promoting more environmentally sensitive agricultural practices in our region given the ongoing effects of climate change and Midpen’s mission to protect the natural environment and encourage viable agriculture use. For example, practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural systems, practices that increase carbon capture or sequestration within agricultural systems, practices that reduce non-target effects of agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers or pesticides, and practices that promote habitat for wildlife. How might Midpen best support these goals in agricultural regions of the San Mateo Coast? Please rank the following options from 1 through 6 with 1 being the most valuable/preferred and 6 being the least valuable/preferred. If you have other ideas, please add them at the end of this question.

- _____ Require such practices on Midpen agricultural lands.
- _____ Incentivize but do not require such practices on Midpen lands.
- _____ Support research to better understand viable methods for meeting these goals in agricultural production systems.
- _____ Support education and outreach on scientifically validated, environmentally sensitive practices.
- _____ Support partners such as the Resource Conservation District that currently have programs to promote these practices by helping producers overcome financial or technical barriers to implement such practices.
- _____ Favor organic pesticides, fertilizers, and other organic practices on Midpen agricultural lands.

Other ideas? Please add them here or attach them as additional pages.

- 2) Midpen does not normally acquire fee title or easements on intensive agricultural lands (i.e., row crops, greenhouses). Are there other ways Midpen might consider supporting more intensive agriculture that align with its mission and role?

- Yes
- No

If you answered YES, please prioritize the following ways Midpen might consider supporting more intensive agriculture:

- _____ Offer grants and/or funding contributions to partners who are actively acquiring easements and fee title to preserve intensive agricultural lands
- _____ Offer grants to partners who are implementing new infrastructure projects that support environmentally sensitive practices on intensive agricultural lands

_____ Expand community education and outreach to help build awareness and appreciation for local intensive agriculture among the general public.

If you have other thoughts or comments, please add them here or attach additional pages.

- 3) Midpen has remained primarily focused on preserving rangelands and maintaining its conservation grazing program as a tool to protect the biodiversity of grasslands, reduce fuels and fire risk, and promote viable agricultural use of land resources. Recognizing this focus, how might Midpen best support the protection of row crop land and other forms of non-rangeland (non-grazing) agriculture on the San Mateo County coast? Please choose one of the following:
- Separate these lands in the acquisition process so that they can be maintained under private ownership and management.
 - Support partner organizations such as the Resource Conservation District or Peninsula Open Space Trust in their efforts to protect and manage these lands.
 - Avoid involvement with these types of agricultural uses.
 - Another preferred idea? Please explain here or attach additional pages.
- 4) When Midpen acquires an agricultural property, and there is an existing agricultural operator on site, our practice has generally been to work with the existing operator and to enter into a long-term lease with them (typically 5 years with one option for a 5-year extension at Midpen's discretion). How and when might Midpen consider providing the opportunity for other ranchers/farm operators to compete for a lease on Midpen lands? Please choose one of the following:
- Once an agricultural production or rangeland management plan is approved for a property.
 - After the end of a long term lease, including any associated eligible lease extensions.
 - Preference should be given to the current operator if they remain in good standing for at least two (2) lease cycles.
 - Preference should be given to the current operator if they remain in good standing for at least three (3) lease cycles.
- 5) Agricultural Leases: Currently, Midpen conservation grazing leases are typically set for a 5-year term with one option for a 5-year extension at Midpen's discretion for a total of 10 years. Please choose one of the following. Do you consider these terms:
- Just right?
 - Too short?
 - Too long?

- Other? Please explain here or attach additional pages as needed.
- 6) Agricultural Housing: Midpen currently provides one (1) discounted agricultural work force house for onsite labor. It also rents housing to agricultural operators (lessees) at two (2) other sites. What are your thoughts about Midpen's role in agricultural work force housing?
- When housing units on Midpen's agricultural lands are available for renting, and Midpen does not require the housing for its operational needs, Midpen should prioritize renting by onsite agricultural operators for their use or for their employee's use.
 - When housing units on Midpen lands are not needed to support either Midpen operational needs or onsite agricultural operations, Midpen should prioritize regional agricultural work force needs when soliciting interested renters.
 - Midpen should explore the feasibility and suitability of working with partners to lease or sell land to non-profit housing organizations for them to build/install new agricultural workforce housing units.
 - If you have other ideas, please describe them here or attach additional pages.
- 7) Water use: Midpen manages water consumption to balance operational/agricultural and environmental/ecological needs. How might Midpen best support agricultural water needs while maintaining this balance? Please choose one of the following:
- Expand financial support to agricultural operations on Midpen lands for actions that facilitate water efficient practices.
 - Fund partners like the Resource Conservation District who have existing programs to support agriculture practices that promote efficient water use.
 - Invest in water storage, new wells, and/or other strategies on Midpen lands to reduce dependency of in-stream water use.
- 8) Marketing and Promotion: Midpen allows agricultural tenants to post signs within the lease areas that identify/promote the agricultural producer and educates visitors about the role of agricultural lands in protecting open space and natural resource values. What might Midpen's role be as a public agency with regards to the marketing and promotion of agricultural uses/operators. Please choose from the following:
- Midpen should continue allowing tenants to post signs within lease areas.
 - Midpen should explore opportunities to promote producers on Midpen lands if they are interested.
 - Midpen should partner in regional efforts that educate the public about the land conservation and environmental benefits of local agriculture.
 - Midpen should prohibit all marketing on its lands.
 - Another idea? Please explain here or attach additional pages as needed.

9) How might Midpen better preserve the rural character and promote viable agricultural use on the San Mateo coast while continuing to protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for public enjoyment and education?

10) Please help us understand your role in local agricultural production by selecting from the following (choose all that apply)

- I am the primary decision maker in terms of day to day and seasonal operations on a farm or ranch in coastal the San Mateo County
- I provide labor and carry out the basic work of operating a farm or ranch in coastal San Mateo County
- I don't work directly at a farm or ranch, but I am interested in supporting our agricultural community in coastal San Mateo County
- I would like to become more involved in the operation and management of a farm or ranch in coastal San Mateo County
- Other? Please briefly explain your role in local agriculture or share your interest in agriculture on the coast here.

11) What type of agricultural operation are you active or interested in:

- Floral and Nursery crops
- Vegetables
- Fruit and Nuts
- Livestock (e.g., cattle, goats, pigs, poultry etc.)
- Livestock Products (Honey, cheese, eggs, wool etc.)
- Field Crops (Beans, grain, oat rye, hay, pasture)

12) If you are an agricultural operator or work for an agricultural operation, please indicate the type of operation you engage in:

- Conventional agricultural operation
- Organic agricultural operation
- Other? Please explain: _____

Also, to expand our understanding of current practices, please let us know what practices, if any, your operation uses to reduce operational greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon

capture and/or sequestration, reduce non-target effects of agricultural chemicals, and/or protect habitat for wildlife.

Thank you for providing your input on this agricultural policy development survey. If you would like to receive future notifications about the policy development, please sign up via email on our coastal interested parties list at www.openspace.org/opt-in.