

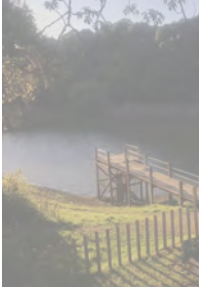
# PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

Advisory Committee Meeting  
May 31, 2022



*PROS Plan purpose:*

*Set the **framework for decision makers** in the planning, maintenance, development, and/or rehabilitation of Belmont's Parks and open space system for a **15 year horizon**.*



**Purpose** *To discuss the Open Space Management Plan and provide guidance for the future of Belmont's Open Spaces*

## Open Space Management Plan

- Environmental Assessment
- Base Plan and Management Alternatives
- Implementation Actions and Requirements

## Next Steps

# OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

**Adoption of the OSMP will enable the city to:**

- **Augment existing goals and policies pertaining to open space**
- **Commit to specific “implementation actions”**
  - *Actions may require funding, and possible environmental compliance and permitting requirements.*

# OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN\*

Key issues addressed:



**Environmental  
Sustainability**



**Balanced  
Recreational  
Uses + Trail  
Management**

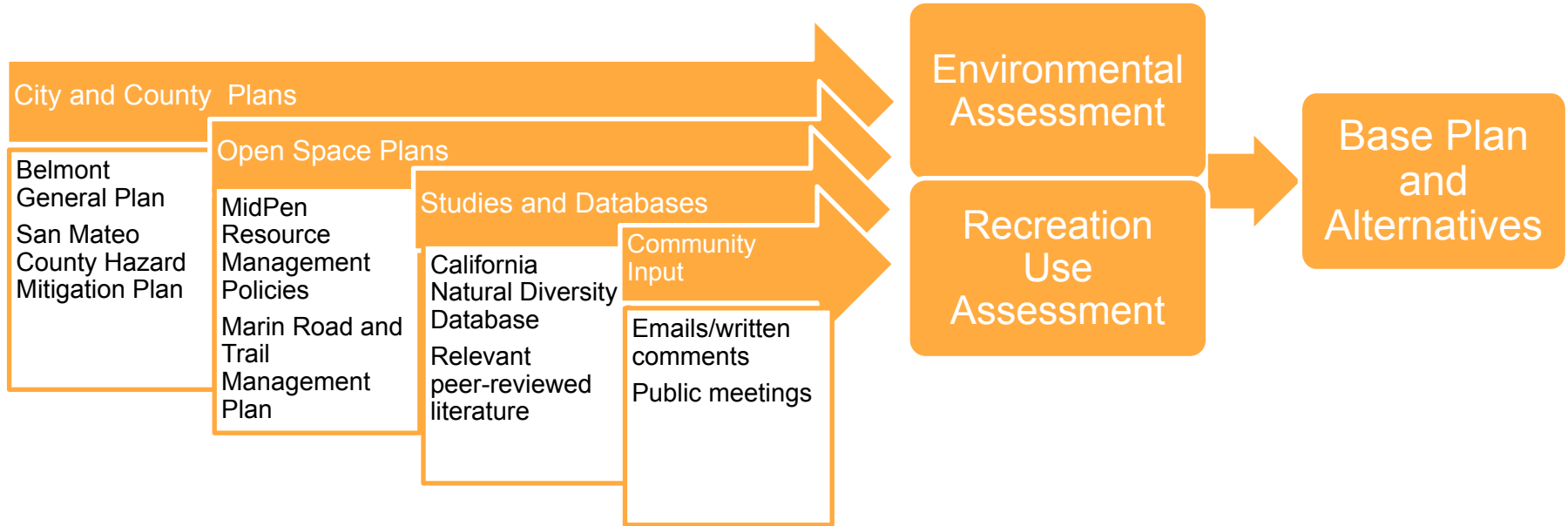


**Natural Hazard  
Mitigation**



Figure X. San Juan Canyon and Waterdog Lake Open Spaces

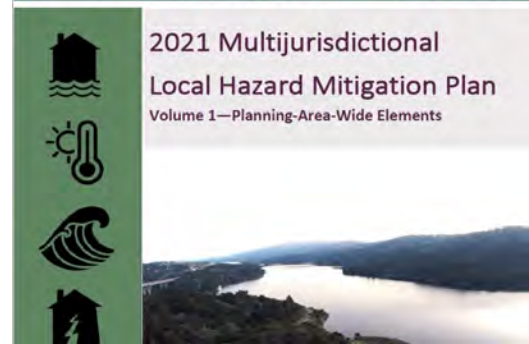
# Inputs to Base Plan and Management Alternatives





# Existing Planning Documents Used

- San Mateo County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2021)
- ADA Transition Plan (2018)
- 2035 GP, Parks and Conservation Elements (2017)
- Belmont Climate Action Plan (2017)
- Open Space Trail Master Plan (1998)
- San Juan Hills Plan Area Plan (1988)
- Belmont Parks and Open Space Plan (1992)
- Western Hills Area Plan (1990)



4

Parks, Recreation, and  
Open Space Element

5

Conservation Element



# Policy Gaps addressed by OSMP

- Protection of riparian resources
- Adaptive management and monitoring
- Trail closures/re-routing
- Trail maintenance
- E-bikes





# Environmental Assessment



# Environmental Assessment

- **The environmental assessment is:**

- Is a master planning level study to support development of goals, policies, and implementation actions.
- Involves limited fieldwork to identify any environmental concerns that will require detailed field based evaluation.

- **The environmental assessment is not:**

- A research project
- A complete vegetation survey of the entire open space areas
- A series of wildlife surveys to verify the presence of common or sensitive wildlife species.

# Environmental Assessment Components

## Desktop Review and Field Assessment of:

1. Common & sensitive plant species
2. Common & sensitive animal species
3. Vegetation communities-naturally occurring and exotic
4. Trail conditions



# Environmental Assessment: Methods

## Desktop Review of Environmental Conditions

- CNDDDB records
- USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation Species
- CNPS Inventory records
- California Species of Special Concern
- USFWS Critical Habitat Mapper





# Environmental Assessment: Methods

## Field Assessment of Environmental Conditions (WDL and SJC)

1. Verify in the field vegetation communities identified in San Mateo County data (2021)
2. Assess conditions of trails
3. Determine if existing conditions provide suitable habitat for any special-status species
4. Assess baseline conditions of vegetation and wildlife habitat
5. Note any common wildlife and plant species observed



# Environmental Assessment: Results

## Initial Field Assessment of Environmental Conditions

- 2 WRA staff performed field assessments on March 8, 21, and 22
- Traversed over 10 miles of existing trails



# Vegetation Rating Categories:

- High Quality/Mostly Intact
- Moderate Quality/Moderately Altered
- Low Quality
- Low Quality/ Extensively Altered





# Environmental Assessment: Results

Verify in the field vegetation communities at Waterdog Lake

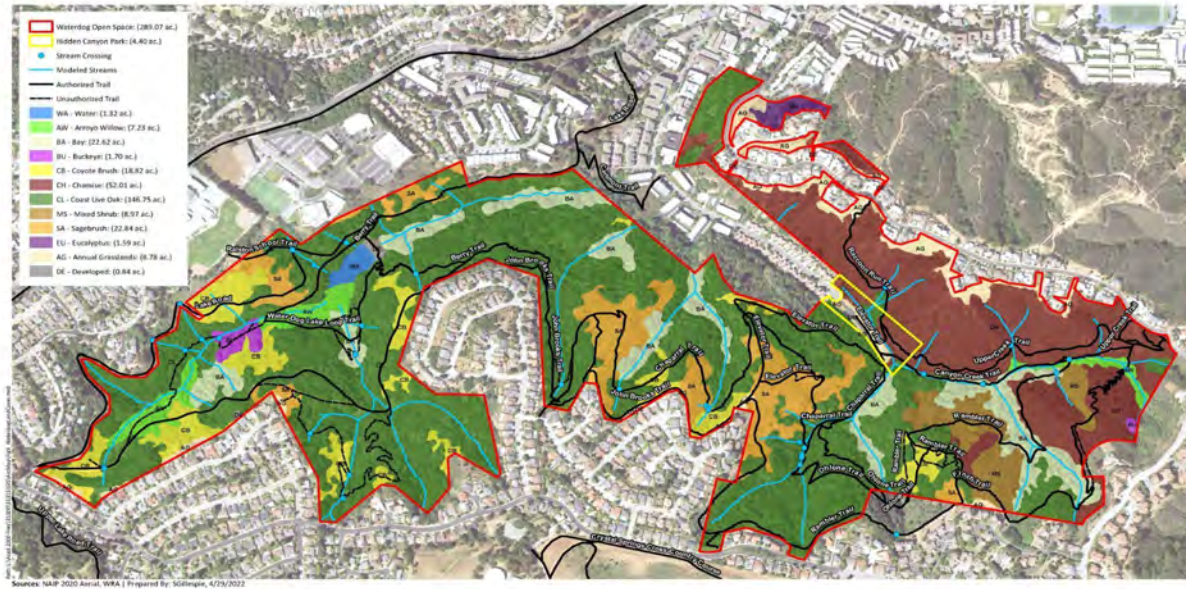


Figure 3. Waterdog Lake & Open Space Land Cover Types

Waterdog Lake Open Space  
Belmont, California

0 200 400 Feet

 **wra**  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS



# Most abundant vegetation types at WDL





# Environmental Assessment: Results

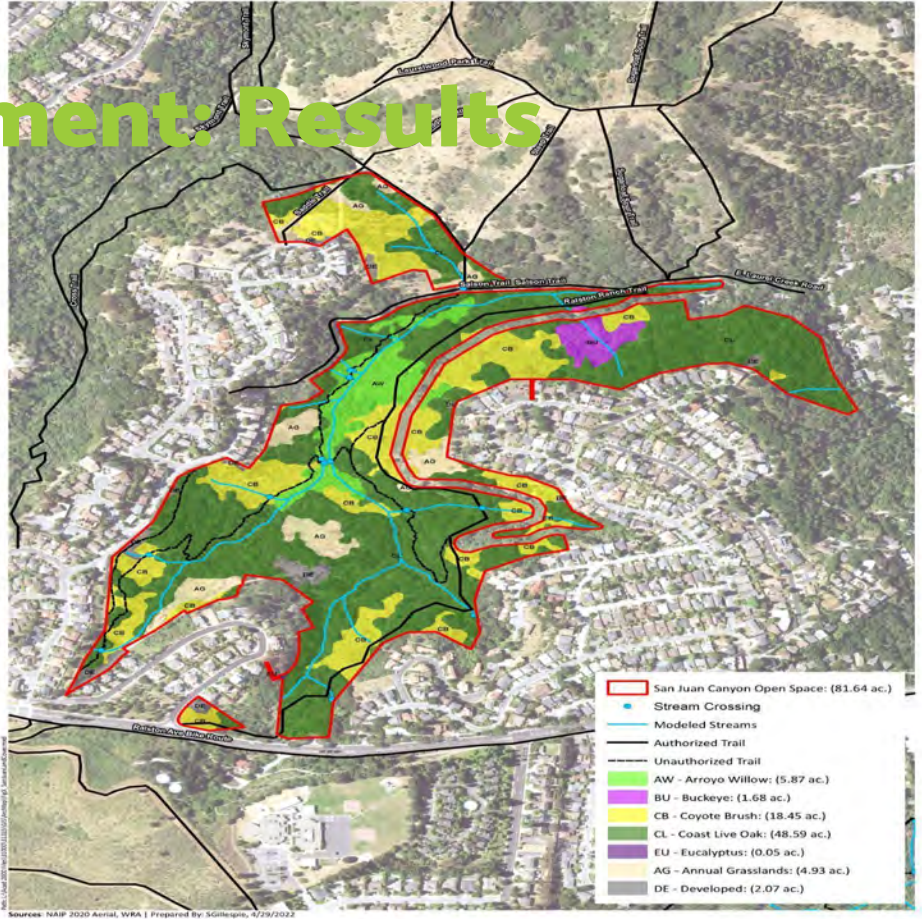


Figure 2. San Juan Canyon Open Space Land Cover Types

San Juan Canyon Open Space  
Belmont, California





# Most abundant vegetation types at SJC



# Environmental Assessment: trail condition indicators

- A. Trail erosion
- B. Presence of multiple (braided) trails or trail sections in a single area
- C. Presence of unofficial trails
- D. Stream crossings





# Environmental Assessment: Trail Condition Findings

Location	Low Erosion	Medium Erosion	High Erosion	Total Erosion Instances
<b>WATERDOG LAKE</b>				
Official trails	127 (56%)	77 (34%)	25 (11%)	229
Unofficial trails	59 (83%)	7 (10%)	6 (8%)	71
<b>SAN JUAN CANYON</b>				
Official trails	5 (38%)	7 (54%)	1 (8%)	13
Unofficial trails	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	13

# Environmental Assessment: Trail Density Findings

- Trail density not having an effect on other environmental indicators:
  - Presence of common wildlife species
  - Presence of special status wildlife species
  - Habitat conditions
  - Carnivore movements

# Environmental Assessment: Findings

## Sensitive Wildlife with Moderate or higher potential to occur

- Western (Pacific) pond turtle
- Olive-sided flycatcher
- White-tailed kite
- San Francisco (saltmarsh) common yellowthroat
- Hoary bat
- American badger



# Environmental Assessment: Findings

During the March site visits WRA confirmed presence of these two special-status species

1. Western leatherwood
2. San Francisco Dusky Footed Woodrat



# Environmental Assessment: Findings

## Regarding baseline conditions of vegetation and wildlife habitat:

- A. Most vegetation is in good condition.
- B. Low potential to occur for many sensitive plant and animal species identified during “desktop” review
- C. Recreation use generally not having environmental impacts
  - a. *Exception: trails that go directly through stream channels that are not “protected” with erosion stabilization features*
- D. Both open space areas contain habitat for bobcats and mountain lions.





# Environmental Assessment: Findings

## Common Wildlife Identified

- California towhee
- Spotted towhee
- Wrentit
- California quail
- Anna's hummingbird
- Common Merganser
- Mallard
- Red-shouldered hawk
- Mountain lion\*
- Bobcat\*
- Black-tailed mule deer
- Western fence lizard
- Pond turtle



# Environmental Assessment: Findings

## Common Plants Identified

- Bullthistle
- Annual hairgrass
- Sticky monkeyflower
- Yerba santa
- Blue gum eucalyptus
- Fennel
- French broom
- Toyon
- Foxtail barley
- Goldfields
- Arroyo lupine
- Pineapple weed
- Bur clover
- Gold back fern
- Harding grass
- Western choke cherry
- Coast live oak
- California blackberry
- Common snowberry



# Environmental Assessment: Trail Critical and Possible Recommendations

1. Critical: Address severe erosion areas
2. Critical: Protect stream crossings or reroute
3. *Consider potential further assessment to determine disposition of trails for appropriate management:*
  - *Maintain as is*
  - *Re-construct in the current, exact location for hydrology*
  - *Construct new segment along the same general route*
  - *Re-route entire trail*
  - *Seasonal closures*
  - *Permanent closures*

# Recreation Use Assessment





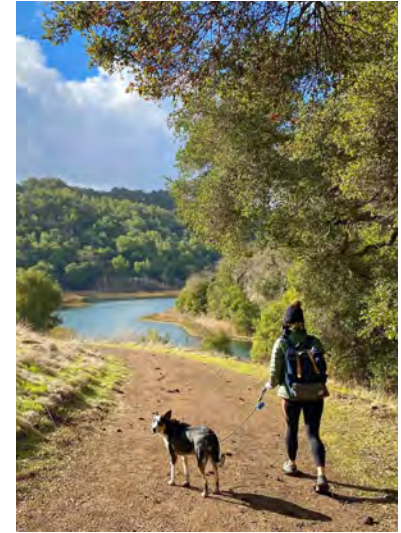
# Recreation Use Assessment: Methods\*

## Desktop Review

1. Note potential safety issues during trail conditions assessment.
2. Review local and regional trends in open space recreational uses.
3. Consider opportunities to improve trail user experiences.

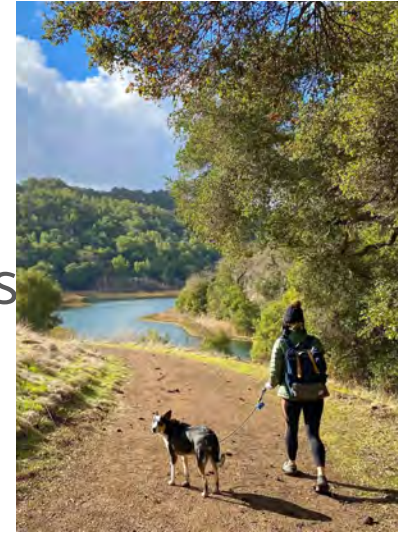
## Field Assessment of Environmental Conditions

- 2 WRA staff performed 2 additional days of field assessments



# Recreational Use Assessment: Findings

- Many trails or trail segments lack adequate signage and wayfinding.
- Some trail segments lack sustainable alignments/construction.
- There are multiple areas where visitor experiences could be enhanced.



# Recreation Use Assessment: Recommendations

1. Adopt trail construction standards for which existing trails can be assessed and improved.
2. Consider single use and single travel direction trail segments to enhance visitor experiences.
3. Measure recreation use and survey non-visitors to evaluate visitor experiences and management actions.



# Wildfire Hazard Assessment



# Wildland Fire Assessment: Findings

1. Calfire rates the two open space areas as very high (WDL) and high for SJC
2. Majority of vegetation in WDL and SJC open space areas are ranked low hazard and low ignition potential.
3. Many of the WDL open space lands immediately adjacent to residential areas subjected to recent fuel reduction.



# Management Alternatives Update



# Base Plan and Management

## Alternatives

1. The Base Plan is a set of objectives, policies, and implementation actions.
  - a. Added new objectives and policies based on WRA's expertise and experience.
  - b. Many of these originated from city planning documents.
2. Objectives and policies from 2035 GP, Park & Recreation, and Conservation Elements are incorporated by reference.
3. One alternative provides an additional recreational policy.
4. One alternative provides additional habitat protection and restoration policies.



# Objectives cover the following categories:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Balanced Recreation Use
- Natural Hazard Mitigation
- Vegetation Protection
- Wildlife Protection
- Water Resources
- Science based Management (Adaptive management)
- Expanded ability (human, financial resources)

# Base Plan

- Includes 39 new policies.
- Includes 28 implementation actions.
- Representative implementation actions include:
  - *Actively seek additional funding sources to support wildfire hazard mitigation.*
  - *Periodically conduct visitor surveys to gauge experiences for all trail users.*
  - *Monitor and control exotic or nuisance plant species.*

# Recreation Emphasis Alternative

- Contains 1 additional policy (evaluate new trails)
- Includes 3 additional implementation actions:
  - *Designate existing connection routes or build new trails between open space areas*
  - *Implement single-use and one-way trail segments in areas identified in the Recreation Use Assessment*
  - *Evaluate potential new nature-based recreation programming for open space lands.*

# Habitat Emphasis Alternative

- Contains 4 additional new policies:
  - *Expand volunteer restoration programs.*
  - *Preserve and enhance native wildlife habitat.*
  - *Preserve and enhance riparian, stream, and other wetland communities.*
  - *Partner with abutting property owners to manage adjacent fuel loads and vegetation.*



# Habitat Emphasis Alternative

- Contains 4 additional implementation actions:
  - *Engage volunteer groups to monitor plant and wildlife species using citizen science efforts.*
  - *Restore and expand native bunchgrass areas.*
  - *Install wildlife cameras at high activity locations or in riparian habitats to monitor wildlife presence.*
  - *Install decontamination stations at high use trailheads to prevent the spread of SOD.*

# Implementation Requirements and Examples\*

Easy	Medium	Hard
<p>These actions can be performed immediately under existing City programs, funding, or with minimal additional effort.</p>	<p>These actions require additional planning, equipment, staffing, funding – either internal or external, or other operational changes.</p>	<p>These actions may require substantial planning, interagency coordination, staffing, funding, or other operational changes.</p>
<p>Provide educational materials on Sudden Oak Death (SOD) and information about how to minimize the spread of SOD at high use trailheads.</p>	<p>Realign, add drainage or otherwise improve trail sections identified in the Recreation Use Assessment as having “high” erosion levels. The Rambler Trail was identified as a top priority given its severity. Prioritize other trail segments for improvement and incorporate into a multi-year workplan.</p>	<p>Periodically inventory trails and facilities to assess any impacts to watercourses, riparian areas, and wetlands, and prepare plans for protection or restoration, as appropriate.</p>



# Next Steps

1. Review/comment on Environmental Assessment and Recreation Use Assessment.
2. Review/comment on Base Plan.
3. Review/comment on Alternatives.
4. Open House event June 13
  - Hidden Canyon Park, 5-7pm
5. Plan adoption by City Council July 12.



# SCHEDULE

## OPEN SPACE MGMT PLAN



### Continuing Community Input Opportunities

- Email to [info@belmontprosplan.com](mailto:info@belmontprosplan.com)
- May 31st PROS Advisory Committee
- OSMP Event planned for mid-June



# THANK YOU!



# ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Q + A

# **PUBLIC** **COMMENTS**

*2 minutes per speaker*

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS



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