

RCDT
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PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 15, 2008
To: Paul Ringgold
From: Chris Detwiller
Re: Stewardship Strategy Update: Rancho Corral de Tierra

This document is intended to review the stewardship strategies identified in POST's 2003 Stewardship Strategy Report and to assess what strategies have been carried out effectively, which are ongoing, and which need improvement or adjustment.

The following is an excerpt from the 2003 Stewardship Strategy Report that details the Action Plan for immediate threats to the property and anticipated expenses. This is followed by a summary of stewardship activities and actual expenses for financial years 2003-2007. The final section provides an assessment of anticipated versus actual expenses, results obtained from these expenditures, and recommendations moving forward.

"VIII. Action Plan for Immediate Threats

Site Security

The primary immediate threat to resources on this property is the continuation of historic uncontrolled uses, primarily that of off-road vehicles on roads and informal trail networks. In order to prevent this continued use, POST has developed a site security plan that identifies key access points onto the property from existing public roads.

To date, all gates identified in the plan have been installed, along with numerous informational signs at "walk-in" entrance points. These signs encourage non-vehicular users to contact POST's office for a permit to access the property, thereby allowing POST the opportunity to inform the public about the property, our intention to transfer it into public ownership, and our interim concerns regarding unregulated access. Permit holders, along with all tenants and equestrian facility users are encouraged to report unauthorized vehicular use of the property to the county sheriff.

Project costs are estimated to be ongoing at approximately \$3,000 per year. This includes installation and continued maintenance and replacement of gates, fences and signage. This project also includes continued monitoring of the property by POST staff and volunteers, and increased levels of cooperation by local law enforcement officials in responding to notification of trespassers. Due to the proximity of this property to developed areas and relative ease of access along multiple public roads, continued vigilance and expenditures will be necessary to prevent these uncontrolled uses of the property.

Upland Erosion Control

Hand in hand with uncontrolled uses has come the need for mitigation of upland erosion areas. Unlike many of POST's other coastal properties, the Rancho Corral property does not contain significant erosion features associated with large gullies. However, the historic lack of security and maintenance of roads and trails on the property (due to long-term previous ownership by absentee landlords) has led to severe erosion issues in selected locations on the property. Initial assessments of the property indicate erosion to be occurring in areas of concentrated use, thus making mitigation projects more manageable and less costly.

To date, POST has developed an erosion control plan for the most severely impacted portion of the property, which is adjacent to the community of Montara and has had open public access via a maintained road easement across the property. POST has worked cooperatively with the easement holder (Montara Sanitary and Water District) to install a gate at the entrance and repair damage to the road. Both of these activities were conducted at the expense of the easement holder. Having secured access, POST will now conduct a comprehensive restoration of the network of off-road vehicle trails that had been developed in that area. The anticipated cost of this phase of the project is \$27,000, and the work will be complete by the end of FY04."

Stewardship Activity Summary, FY03-FY07

The following is a summary of actual expenses for Technical Services and Maintenance for FY03-FY07.

Blue = Site security
Green = Erosion control
Black = Other

Technical Services

FY02: a) general planning (\$34,331); b) biological assessment report (Go Native Nursery - \$23,500); c) GGNRA boundary expansion study (Doug Nadeau - \$8,160); d) mapping (GreenInfo Network - \$845).

FY03: a) supplemental resource assessment (LSA - \$2,280); b) erosion control plan (Timothy Best - \$318); c) water quality testing in wells near equestrian stables (AnaCon Testing Laboratories - \$220).

FY04: road repair design and oversight (Timothy Best - \$685).

FY05: a) road assessment and repair planning (Timothy Best - \$719; Landsmiths - \$405); b) water rights investigation (Tina Coleman - \$715).

FY06: a) water rights investigation (Tina Coleman - \$215); b) signage (Fast Signs - \$125).

FY07: review of water use agreement (Tina Coleman - \$2,870).

Work planned for FY08 is road network erosion control assessment (\$2,000).

Maintenance

FY02: mowing of firebreaks (Louis Iacopi - \$2,850).

FY03: a) mowing of firebreaks (Iacopi - \$2,000); b) gates, sign placement, debris removal and miscellaneous property maintenance (Landsmiths - \$1,100; All-American Tractor & Tree - \$1,410).

FY04: a) road repair and associated erosion control measures (Bushwackers and Landsmiths - \$9,614 [\$700 of this cost was reimbursed by Montara Water & Sanitary District]); c) mowing of firebreaks (Louis Iacopi - \$2,600); d) debris removal (Jennifer Harwood - \$900); f) site security, including gates (Landsmiths - \$457 [\$412 of this cost was reimbursed by Montara Water & Sanitary District]).

FY05: a) gates, sign placement, debris removal and miscellaneous property maintenance (Landsmiths - \$5,379; Steven Melo - \$1,900); b) mowing of firebreaks (Louis Iacopi - \$2,000); c) weed control (Jack Bettencourt - \$70).

FY06: a) restriction signage (Fast Signs - \$250); b) general property maintenance and patrol (Landsmiths - \$9,477); c) mowing (Louis Iacopi - \$1,967); d) tree removal at Ocean View farms (Steven Melo Landscaping & Garden - \$150); e) debris clean up (Steven Melo, Inc. - \$100).

FY07 includes: a) general property maintenance and patrol (Landsmiths - \$571, Go Native Nursery - \$976); b) mowing (Steven Melo, Inc. - \$100, Louis Iacopi - \$4,100); c) restriction signage (DiVittorio & Associates - \$1,038); d) tree removal (Steven Melo, Inc. - \$500); e) erosion control (Go Native Nursery - \$3,165, Pastorino Hay and Ranch Supply, Inc. - \$148). Work planned for FY08: a) erosion control (\$5,000); b) pampas grass control (\$10,160).

Results: Resource Goals identified in 2003 Stewardship Strategy Report

Short-Term Goals (to be achieved by POST prior to transfer)

- Installation of gates and fences as necessary to prevent access to the property at key boundary points
 - Projected: \$3,000/yr
 - Actual: \$1,814
 - Results and Recommendations: Efforts have proven effective, but continued efforts are required. Vehicles, especially ATVs and dirtbikes, continue to get into the property. Some signs have been replaced due to destruction or removal. I recommend further assessment of access points and installation of additional gates or other barriers. POST continues to consult with neighboring landowners and property managers and the Sheriff's Department to limit access. As property patrol/monitoring is now done by volunteers, and installation of gates and fences has averaged to just under \$2,000/year, I recommend that the projected expenditure for

this measure be reduced to \$2,000/year. This does not include any unforeseen costs that may be required outside of normal work.

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- Repair of damage associated with high-impact off-road vehicle use areas
 - Projected: \$30,000/yr 1, \$20,000/yr after that
 - Actual: Planning: \$2,127 (\$425.40/yr), Maintenance: \$12,927 (\$2,585.40/yr)
 - Results and Recommendations: Successful in limited areas where implemented. In addition to the work done on the MWSD access road, a project at Coral Reef Avenue was successful in decreasing erosion and runoff caused by off-road vehicle use. A recent visit to the MWSD access road revealed that the road improvements are not being adequately maintained by MWSD, and materials are being lost to erosion. This illuminates the importance of monitoring these areas even when management responsibility does not lie with POST.

“Comprehensive restoration of the network of off-road vehicle trails” has not occurred. Based on budget priorities, POST did not have the capacity to dedicate the projected \$20,000/year to repair all of these areas, though the need still remains. POST has funds in the FY08 budget to do a roads and trails assessment, which will identify and prioritize erosion and access issues. Based on recommendations, POST will determine how to move forward and to allocate funds for this work.

- Implementation of soil conservation techniques on farmland and in highly erodible areas control of spread of Pampas grass (eradication of some populations, as feasible)
 - Projected: \$10,000/yr 1, \$5,000/yr after that
 - Actual: \$70 (\$14/yr)
 - Results and Recommendations: Pampas treatment for the western portion of the McNee Ranch parcel using Caltrans funds (\$10,160) was very successful, with follow-up treatment planned for Summer 2008. Based on budget priorities, POST did not have the capacity to dedicate the \$10,000 and projected \$5,000/year to treat Pampas in all of these areas, though the need still remains. POST will be looking into the possibility of working with the GGNRA to cooperatively identify, prioritize, and treat target invasives on Rancho Corral de Tierra.
- Assessment of water use and infrastructure on the property, with goal of determining future availability for agricultural and domestic uses
 - Projected: Water supply assessment: \$5,000; water quality monitoring: \$500/yr; well abandonment: \$10,000; infrastructure maintenance: \$3,000/yr (by tenant)
 - Actual \$3,800 (\$760/yr)
 - Results and Recommendations: The water supply assessment was completed through the work of attorneys Tina Coleman and Paul Kibel. Water quality monitoring on San Vicente Creek by the Resource Conservation District continues, with POST now sharing the cost of the program with Moss Beach and Ember Ridge equestrian facilities (cost to POST is \$800/year). Well abandonment never occurred, as the County

was unable to locate the wells to be abandoned. Montara Water and Sanitary District located a well for their use that was off of POST property. Tenant continues to maintain water supply infrastructure.

Summary of Recommendations

POST's most urgent threats and strategies to address these threats are related to site security, off-road vehicle use, and subsequent erosion. POST responded to this effectively at the Montara Water and Sanitary District site with the installation of gates, roadwork, and tank traps. POST also responded by improving gates and signage at access points, an activity that continues today. These activities have likely cut down on off-road vehicle access. Vehicles do still access the property, however, resulting in erosion, destruction of vegetation, and harassment to animals and hikers, making continued efforts to restrict access crucial.

Recent discussions with the property manager of a neighboring property (Jack Bettencourt of the gun club on the Eng property) have revealed that, while access by trucks and SUVs has decreased, motorized dirtbikes continue to access the property. This is because the small bikes are easily maneuvered around physical barriers, and their agility and speed make them difficult to catch. I recommend that POST discuss these issues further with neighboring property owners and land managers, and look further into options available to reduce this activity, including but not limited to physical barriers and patrol/enforcement. The costs and benefits of these options should then be assessed in regard to the extent of damage being caused to the property, with recommendations forthcoming from those results.

POST has budgeted for 2008 a comprehensive roads and trails assessment for some priority sections of Rancho Corral de Tierra. This assessment should map all roads and trails, and provide information as to their viability as trails, current condition, whether this condition is worsening or historic and stable, and a prioritized ranking for erosion control and/or trespass prevention. These recommendations should be presented along with a plan and expected budget.

POST has made significant progress on water rights issues on Rancho Corral de Tierra. We have continued to work with Dave Lea to protect the water rights for agriculture. POST is currently tracking a Coastside County Water District project proposal to dredge a portion of Denniston Reservoir to clear out their intakes and benefit habitat. POST is supportive of this project, provided that we receive assurances from CCWD that POST and its tenant will not end up with a reduction in water availability for agriculture.

Due to budget priorities, POST's treatment of invasive species has been limited, with little to no invasives treatment occurring between 2003 and 2006. In 2007 POST worked with Caltrans, Go Native Nursery, and POST volunteers to treat pampas grass in the lowermost reaches of the McNee Ranch parcel, with follow-up planned for 2008. As for the remainder of the property, the lack of treatment may be due to the sheer size of the property and the sporadic nature of populations of invasives spread throughout the property in difficult-to-access areas. As a response, POST will be looking into the possibility of working with the GGNRA to cooperatively identify, prioritize, and treat target invasives on Rancho Corral de Tierra.