MONTARA WATER AND SANITARY DISTRICT AGENDA

For Meeting Of: January 15**, 2026**

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: Clemens Heldmaier, General Manager

SUBJECT: Review and Possible Action Concerning Letter to Supervisor Ray Mueller Regarding Extreme Fire Danger of Caltrans Right of Way

Red Alert Montana Moss Beach (RAAMB) recently informed staff that the Coastside Fire Protection District (CFPD) had issued a letter to Caltrans confirming the extreme fire danger of Caltrans' unmaintained Right of Way in Montana and Moss Beach. RAAMB has requested District support to engaging the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in agendizing this community safety concern.

Since 2021, the District has repeatedly reached out to engage Caltrans on this issue. To date, we have received little to no reply from Caltrans. Action at the Board of Supervisors is a natural next step to advance this issue.

Staff have drafted a letter to Supervisor Ray Mueller highlighting CFPD's action and asking for the Board of Supervisors to both lead in addressing this public safety issue and to further their 2016 resolution requesting expedited transfer of the property to the District.

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the General Manager to finalize and send a letter to Supervisor Mueller.

Montara Water & Sanitary District

Serving the Communities of Montara and Moss Beach

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DRAFT

January 15, 2026

Supervisor Ray Mueller
500 County Center
5th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063
Via email: SMC_SupMueller@smcgov.org

Re: Please Agendize and Help Address the Extreme Fire Danger of Unmaintained Caltrans Right of Way in Montara

Dear Supervisor Mueller,

Montara Water and Sanitary District (MWSD) was pleased this December to see Coastside Fire Protection District put Caltrans on notice regarding the extreme fire danger of the unmaintained Caltrans Right of Way in Montara. Now, our community looks to you and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to push forward a solution, as we know Caltrans will not.

Please agendize transfer of the Caltrans Right of Way (Bypass Lands) to MWSD, our local public agency committed to reducing fire risk and maintaining the property.

In 2016, with leadership from Supervisor Horseley, the Board unanimously passed a resolution '*strongly supporting Montara Water and Sanitary District in its request to Caltrans for donation of the specified property known as the "Bypass Lands" in Montara, and encourages Caltrans to execute such transfer as soon as possible.'*

Caltrans owns the Montara Bypass Lands, locally known as the Caltrans Right of Way (ROW), in Montara, CA. These lands have been left vacant and untended for decades under Caltrans' ownership. The Bypass Lands parcel is primarily forested sections consisting mainly of Eucalyptus trees, shrubs and heavy undergrowth. Some sections contain untended, unofficial trails that are used by locals and tourists. Other sections allow and even invite illegal dumping.

Over three years ago in July 2021, MWSD contacted Caltrans Deputy District Director Mark L. Weaver on behalf of our community regarding hazardous conditions on the property. Minor clearance work was undertaken in September 2021.

Throughout 2025, MWSD wrote to District 4 Director (now Caltrans Director) Dina El-Tawansy, District 4 Deputy District Director David Ambuehl, Deputy District Director Weaver, and Deputy District Director for Right of Way and Land Surveys Julie McDaniel to address fire hazards on Caltrans property in Montara. **To date, we have received no response. In fact, we're unclear if Caltrans' commitment to you – indicating funds in 2025 for the preparation of the required San Mateo County Local Coastal Program Linear Park and Trail Plan Overlay – was ever acted on.**

As the one year anniversary of the devastating fires in Pacific Palisades and Altadena passes, still no action has been taken in Montara. We still see evidence of extreme fire hazard in our backyards and our critical watershed. The State is facing billions in emergency funding to address the impacts of the Los Angeles fires, but Caltrans cannot find the will or funding to address hazards in San Mateo County that can produce the same results.

The Montara Bypass Lands are a critical fire danger to adjacent homes and the local watershed which supplies all of our community's water. Further, this land is adjacent to the undeveloped 3,858-acre Golden Gate National Recreation Area Rancho Corral de Tierra where uncontrolled fire ignitions could consume the entire coastal mountain range. Caltrans does not have any documented plans for use of this property and clearly no active maintenance, fuel reduction, or risk mitigation program in place to protect our community.

MWSD has long advocated for resolution of this property. In 2021, we proactively sought cost estimates for fire reduction work. We are prepared to address the fire hazards on this parcel, however as a parcel owned and maintained by MWSD. **We have asked that Caltrans address the fire danger on this parcel and then transfer the property to MWSD.**

A fire on this property will not only damage homes, but the storage and plumbing of our community owned water system. A fire in Montara will introduce debris, erosion and toxins into critical coastal ecosystems, the watersheds that provide our drinking water, our community water distribution and sewer collection systems, as well as private and community groundwater wells. These impacts will also be felt on our coastline, and throughout the protected Montara State Marine and Fitzgerald Marine Reserves.

We know how to keep our community safe. We ask to transfer this property to MWSD, a responsible land owner. We are ready to maintain this property and reduce this fire risk.

Sincerely,

President Scott Boyd
On behalf of the Montara Water and Sanitary District Board of Directors
Director Kathryn Slater-Carter
Director Bill Softky
Director Carlysle Ann (Cid) Young
Director Leah Champion

cc: *Via electronic transmission*
State of California Assembly Transportation Committee
CA State Assemblymember Marc Berman

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CA State Senator Josh Becker
Director Dina El-Tawansy, California Department of Transportation
Chief Safety Officer Rachel Carpenter, California Department of Transportation
Director David Ambuehl, District 4, California Department of Transportation
Division Chief of Right of Way and Land Surveys, René Fletcher, California Department of Transportation
County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors:
- President Noelia Corzo
- Supervisor Jackie Speier
- Supervisor Lisa Gauthier
- Supervisor David J. Canepa

Lennie Roberts, Committee for Green Foothills
Steve Monowitz, San Mateo County Planning
Dan Carl, Isobel Cooper, California Coastal Commission
Coastal Conservancy
Rob Bartoli, San Mateo Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo)
Midcoast Community Council
Red Alert Montara Moss Beach (RAMMB)
Bart Ney, Public Affairs Branch Chief, District 4, California Department of Transportation
Jeneane Crawford, Public Information Officer, District 4, California Department of Transportation
Cheryl Chambers, Deputy District Director, External Affairs, District 4, California Department of Transportation

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