



Maddux Ranch Oak Woodland Management Plan – November 2018 Executive Summary for Public Comment



Maddux Ranch Oak Woodland is the northern-most 5-acres of Maddux Ranch Regional Park at 450 Noonan Ranch Lane in Larkfield-Wikiup, near Mark West Elementary and adjacent to the Larkfield Community Garden & Learning Center. Through a grant from Sonoma County Vintners Foundation, Sonoma County Regional Parks and Community Soil Foundation have activated a coordinated effort to effectively restore and manage this site in order to promote public access to open space and natural resources, while restoring the area's ecological functioning and diversity. The purpose of this Executive Summary is to inform a community engagement process (the full version of the Management Plan can be viewed by contacting CSF below).

History and Current Conditions

This area was historically coast live and valley oak woodlands, originally inhabited by Southern Pomo people, who likely managed the area with intentional fires to increase the production of plants and animals for food and construction materials. Mexican settlement in 1830s began grazing and cultivation of valleys and hills in surrounding area, and grew further after European settlement. Over last 70 years, water management has allowed for increased agricultural, residential, and commercial expansion in the Santa Rosa Plain, including Maddux Ranch. This site was a plum orchard until 1989, and was then slowly reestablished by coast live and valley oaks and other native plants, returning to the woodland ecosystem that likely once existed there. Due to history of cultivation and disturbance, there are many non-native and invasive plant species in the area, such as ornamentals, poison oak, Himalayan blackberry. While there is little to no current management of the 5-acre area, it is used by local residents for recreation. Future management of the property could assist this transition back to a healthy oak woodland habitat and create safe conditions for public recreation and outdoor education in a beautiful and wild open space.

Management Goals and Actions

Goal 1. Promote biodiversity.

Action 1.1. Revegetate area with native plants representative of Coastal Oak Woodland and Valley Oak Woodland communities, propagated from local seeds and clippings.

Action 1.2. Minimize soil disturbance (e.g. tilling, driving off roads, off-trail foot traffic) to protect wildlife and plant community while limiting spread of invasive species.

Action 1.3. Control and remove invasive plant species, specifically Himalayan blackberry, Fuller's teasel, Harding grass, Italian thistle, English Ivy, and Plum.

Goal 2. Improve oak woodland structure and ecological functioning.

Action 2.1. Complete baseline data assessment, including wildlife species list and vegetation species density, and create GIS maps to aid in future management decisions.

Action 2.2. Consider how fences or boundaries may be limiting and/or promoting wildlife passage and connectivity to neighboring woodland habitat.

Action 2.3. Selectively thin oak and other tree species (only <6" DBH) to promote tree growth and acorn production of specific individuals, as well as regeneration of young oaks, contributing to the development of mature oak woodland characteristics.

Action 2.4. Maintain and establish wildlife habitat and resources.

Action 2.5. Maintain year-round soil cover via live vegetation or residual dry matter.

Goal 3. Fire fuel reduction.

Action 3.1. Use livestock, hand tools, and machines to manage dead and downed material and dense understory vegetation that create fire ladders and present fire danger to neighborhood. When possible, lop and scatter (below 1.5') or chip vegetation material, and broadcast in a thin layer rather than stockpiling. Logs can be left on ground for habitat.

Action 3.2. Limb mature trees up to 6' in coordination with Regional Parks.

Public Access

A trail will be built and maintained along present roadways, with little to no disturbance to soils, vegetation, and native habitat. Path materials will be determined by funding, environmental conditions, and aesthetic appeal. Interpretive signage must not greatly obstruct views in the management area, must be educational or informative in nature (e.g. natural history, cultural history, resource and property management, botany, wildlife), and must be bilingual (English/Spanish). Maddux Oak Woodlands public access hours and rules are established by predetermined Regional Park regulations.



Request for Public Comment

As the non-profit partner committed to building healthy communities and habitats, Community Soil Foundation is seeking feedback from local residents to inform the management goals and actions. In particular, please consider your input on the following questions:

1. Why do you value this oak woodland site?
2. What additional benefits could it provide to the community?
3. What concerns do you have as we restore its natural functionality and public access?
4. How would you like to be involved in ongoing stewardship of this site?

On Saturday, November 17 from 1-3pm, all are invited to a neighborhood potluck at the Larkfield Community Garden & Learning Center to learn more, walk the woodland, and share your thoughts. Contact info@communitysoil.org with questions or concerns.