Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program

Conceptual Program

June 10, 2021

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

Coastal Conservancy
STATE of CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION

California Department of Parks and Recreation

ktua
Planning and Landscape Architecture

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Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program

Conceptual Approach

June 10, 2021

Introduction

The Hollister Ranch (the Ranch) is a 14,000 acre working cattle ranch located just west of Gaviota State Park, 30 miles west of Santa Barbara. The Ranch covers 8.5 miles of shoreline, with six beaches. In 1971 the Ranch was subdivided into 135 parcels of 100 acres each, and many of those parcels are now developed with homes. The road into the Ranch is on private property, and there is no land-based public access into the Hollister Ranch public beaches.

Four State agencies are leading a planning effort to develop a Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP). The four agencies are the California Coastal Commission, State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Parks and Recreation and the State Land Commission (collectively referred to as the State Agency Team). The State Agency Team is being assisted by KTU&A, a firm specializing in recreation planning and landscape design, and Participation By Design (PBD), which is a neutral facilitator the public engagement process.

This document provides an overview of the proposed conceptual approach to the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program. It includes the key components of the proposed access program and explains the thinking behind the program design. This conceptual approach will be revised into a draft HRCAP based on input received through the planning process.

Please email any comments on this conceptual approach to HRCAP.stakeholders@gmail.com

A Brief History

This section provides a brief history of efforts to provide public access to the Hollister Ranch coastline. Hollister Ranch was purchased and subdivided before the enactment of the Coastal Act. In the late 1970s, the Coastal Commission attempted to obtain public access to the Hollister Ranch coast through the then-traditional regulatory process of requiring individual property owners to provide beach access as a condition of their coastal development permits. This effort was met with strong opposition and multiple lawsuits by property owners. To resolve the disputes between property owners and the Coastal Commission, the Legislature amended the Coastal Act to allow the Coastal Commission to designate coastal subdivisions with inadequate public access as eligible for an alternative process for meeting the Coastal Act's

public access mandate, wherein acquisition is funded through the imposition of in-lieu fees (Public Resources Code 30610.3). Once an area is designated as eligible under this subsection, the Commission develops a coastal access program that will ensure meaningful public access. The Coastal Act tasks the State Coastal Conservancy with implementing the program, pursuant to its authority.

The Coastal Commission designated Hollister Ranch as eligible for this program, and in 1982 approved the Hollister Ranch Public Access Program for the Ranch. This program relied on the acquisition of public access property rights from the Ranch owners, which was to be funded through the in-lieu fee program. The Coastal Conservancy and the Coastal Commission attempted to implement the access program but were unable to overcome landowner opposition and were not able to acquire the necessary property rights. Discussions continued for years, but no access was gained.

Assembly Bill 1680

In 2019, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1680 (AB1680), which had been authored by then Assemblymember Monique Limón. AB1680 directed the Coastal Commission, in consultation with the State Coastal Conservancy, Department of Parks and Recreation, and the State Lands Commission to develop a new public access program for Hollister Ranch by April 1, 2021. Please note that in March 2021, the Coastal Commission reported to the legislature, as directed in AB1680, that the HRCAP would not be completed by April 1, 2021, due to delays from the COVID-19 pandemic and also to ensure there was time for robust public engagement.

AB1680 requires the Program to have the following specified components:

- A public outreach and stakeholder engagement process
- A list of options for providing for public access to the tidelands at the ranch, and the associated costs.
- A description of the physical environment and existing land uses and cultural and historical resources.
- A description of the current level of public access to state-owned tidelands
- A discussion of the educational and scientific opportunities afforded by the existing resources.
- Provisions to preserve sensitive resources.
- A summary of permits needed to implement the program.
- An implementation strategy.
- A requirement to implement the first phase of public access by April 1, 2022, subject to funding by appropriation.

Public Engagement Process

The planning effort has utilized a multi-faceted public engagement approach in an effort to incorporate the interests and concerns of a broad range of Californians. During to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public engagement process has been entirely virtual since March 2020. Here is a brief summary of the main activities to date.

- **Stakeholder Event #1: Initial Interviews** – In December 2019, the consultants from KTUA and PBD conducted approximately 18 interviews with stakeholders from a variety of different perspectives including ranch landowners, public access advocates, environmental organizations, equity and environmental justice advocates, surfers, local government staff, and elected officials. These interviews provided the project facilitator with an overview of many of the perspectives, interests, and concerns related to access to the Hollister Ranch coastline.
- **Survey #1** -- Following the initial interviews, a survey regarding what activities or experiences were of interest to people for increased public access to the Hollister coastline was sent to the HRCAP email list (approximately 1700 email addresses). Over 600 responses were received.
- **Public Workshop in Goleta** – On February 20, 2020, we held the first public workshop for the HRCAP planning effort. Over 170 people participated in an interactive workshop addressing 1) potential interests of new public access to the ranch coastline, 2) concerns about new public access, and 3) ideas for public access that might address both the interests and concerns that had been raised in previous rounds of discussion.
- **Survey #2** – Following the workshop, a second survey was sent seeking input on the same topics that had been discussed at the workshop. Over 1400 responses were received.
- **Working group** – In July 2020, a working group of 18 people with different backgrounds, expertise and perspectives on public access was created to help develop the public access program. The working group has met five times over the past year. The Working Group helped to establish the Program Objectives, the evaluation criteria for assessing potential project components, and provided feedback on the development of this conceptual approach.
- **Survey #3** – In August 2020, a third survey was sent seeking input on the draft Evaluation Criteria that we had developed with the Working Group. We received 744 responses to the survey. Based on the input received, we revised the evaluation criteria and the Working Group approved them in September. A summary document showing changes to the evaluation criteria as a result of survey comments, as well as all of the survey comments received, is available on the Coastal Commission website: https://www.coastal.ca.gov/hollister-ranch/.

- **Story Map** – KTUA developed an interactive "Story Map" that included videos about the existing conditions and opportunities and constraints and provided an opportunity for people to enter specific information on conditions and opportunities at the ranch. We received a total of 300 informational comments on this map.
- **Focused Listening Sessions** – In late 2020 and early 2021, we conducted six focused listening sessions to gain more input on the program design. These sessions were held with:
    - Chumash Tribal representatives
    - Representatives of environmental justice community organizations
    - Hollister Ranch owners
    - Surfers
    - Educators and nonprofit organizations
    - College-aged young adults
- **Information Materials Developed**

  The following materials are available on the Coastal Commission's Hollister Ranch website (https://www.coastal.ca.gov/hollister-ranch/).

    - **Informational Videos** – Working with the KTU&A team we developed several videos to help explain the project to the public. The videos are available:
        - An overview video providing an introducing to the Hollister Ranch coastline and the HRCAP process
        - Existing Conditions
        - Opportunities and Constraints
    - **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQ)– To help address common questions, an FAQ document was prepared in English and Spanish.

Existing Conditions

The existing conditions along the Hollister Ranch coastline are summarized below. Two videos were previously developed that also provide information about the existing conditions on the Ranch:

- Overview Video: https://youtu.be/hA3zEwfamfo
- Existing Conditions Video (also referenced above under the Story Map section): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9ZjQSZziec&list=PLpv0upQwMENWtd2ZU2C2WwgTPv2LQ5paC&index=3&t=5s

Land Ownership, Management, and Access

Hollister Ranch is an approximately 14,000-acre private landholding in western Santa Barbara County. The Ranch consists of 140 parcels of around 100 acres each. Each parcel is owned by one or multiple people, or by the Hollister Ranch Owners Association (HROA), the property owner association to which all individual owners belong (Figure1). Southern Pacific Railroad owns the operating railroad right of way that varies from approximately 50 feet to 200 feet wide atop the coastal bluffs the length of the Ranch.

Overland access to the Ranch is only possible via Rancho Real Road (also referred to as Hollister Ranch Road in Google), which diverges from the Gaviota State Park entry road shortly before the park entry kiosk. Within the Ranch, Rancho Real Road is developed over individually held private property via an easement held by the HROA. Ranch owners and registered guests enter the Ranch through a private, staffed entry gate. Overland coastal access is available for Ranch owners and guests on spur roads from Rancho Real Road to six beach access points along the ranch's approximately 8.5 miles of coastline.

From east to west, the Hollister Ranch beach access points are:

1. Agua Caliente
2. Alegria
3. Sacate
4. Drake's
5. Bulito
6. San Augustin

The shoreline below the mean high tide line (MHTL) is public land according to the public trust doctrine and provisioned for public access by the California Coastal Act (Article 2, Section 30210) and the California Constitution (Section 4, Article X). Land above the mean high tide line is private property. On Hollister Ranch, private property south (seaward) of the railroad property is owned by HROA. Property north of the railroad property is held by individual owners. The HROA holds easements from individual landowners for parking at Agua Caliente and Alegria (Figure 2, example at Alegria). Beach facilities including parking, portable bathrooms, picnic tables, and cabañas are on HROA property at Sacate, Drake's, Bulito, and San Augustin beaches (Figure 3, example at San Augustin). The short access roads from Rancho Real Road to these shoreline access points are also on easements held by the HROA.

Before overland public access can occur to the public shoreline at any access point on Hollister Ranch, property rights or agreements over the road must be obtained by the State or a management agency.

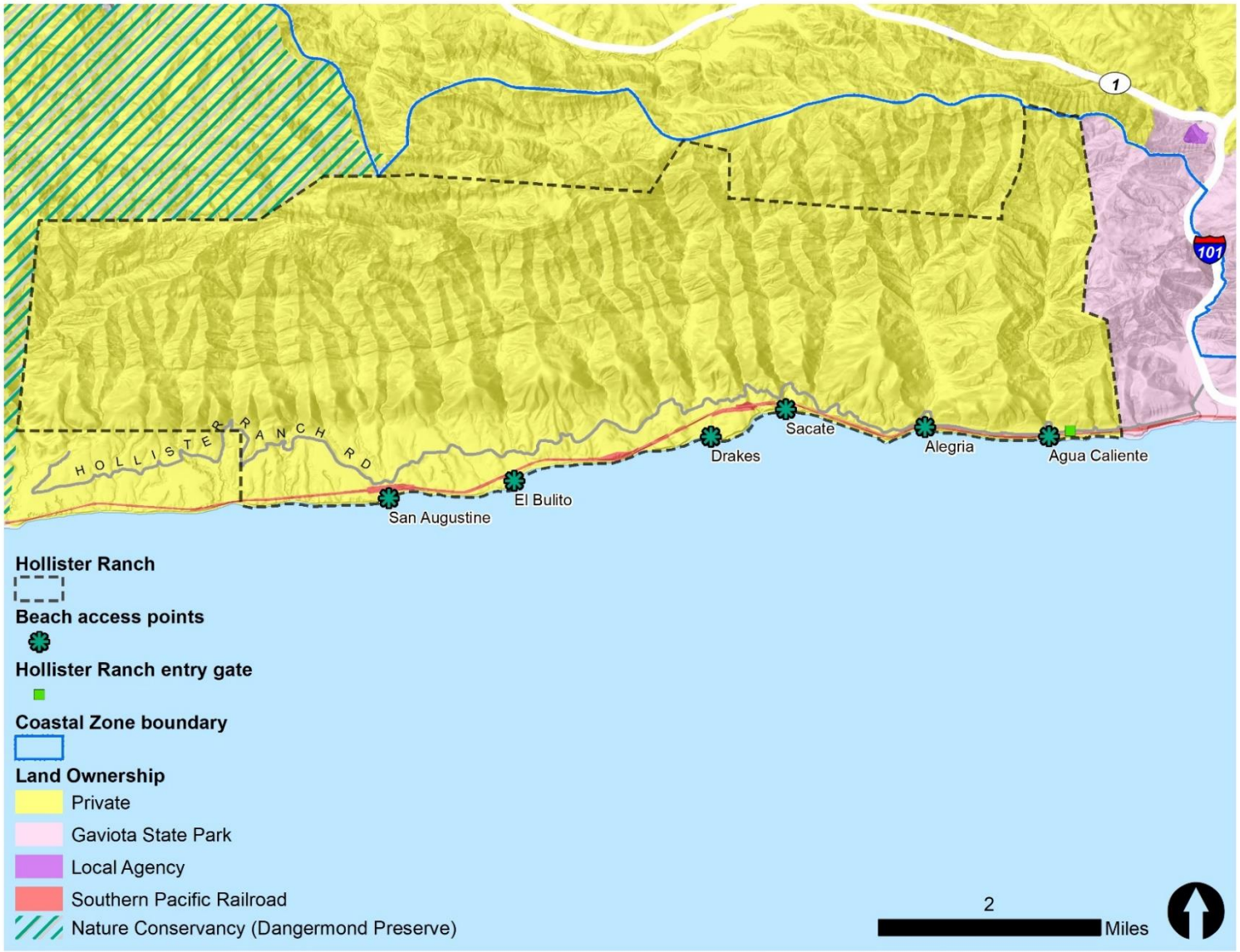


Figure 1. Land Ownership, Management, and Access

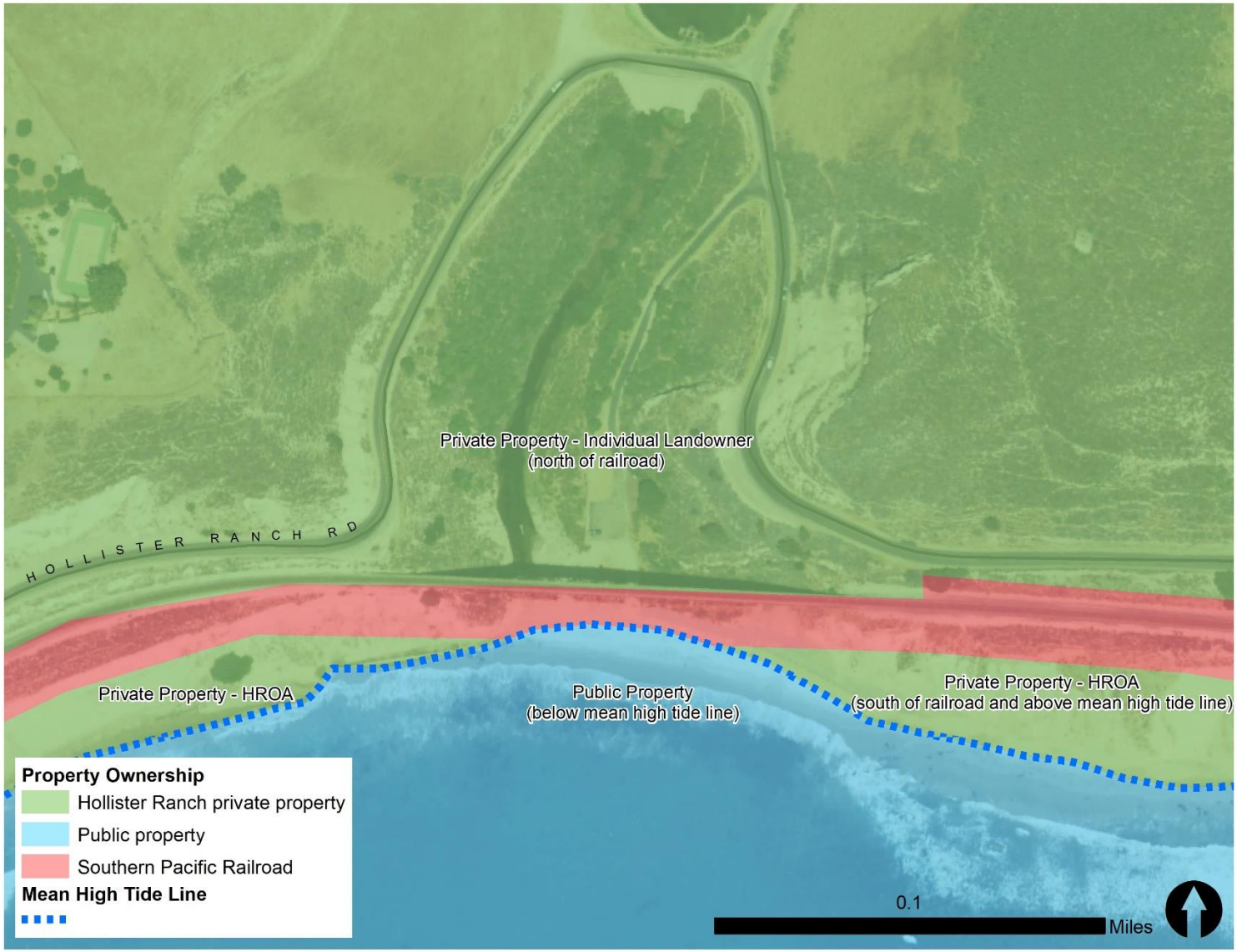


Figure 2. Public and private property at Alegria.

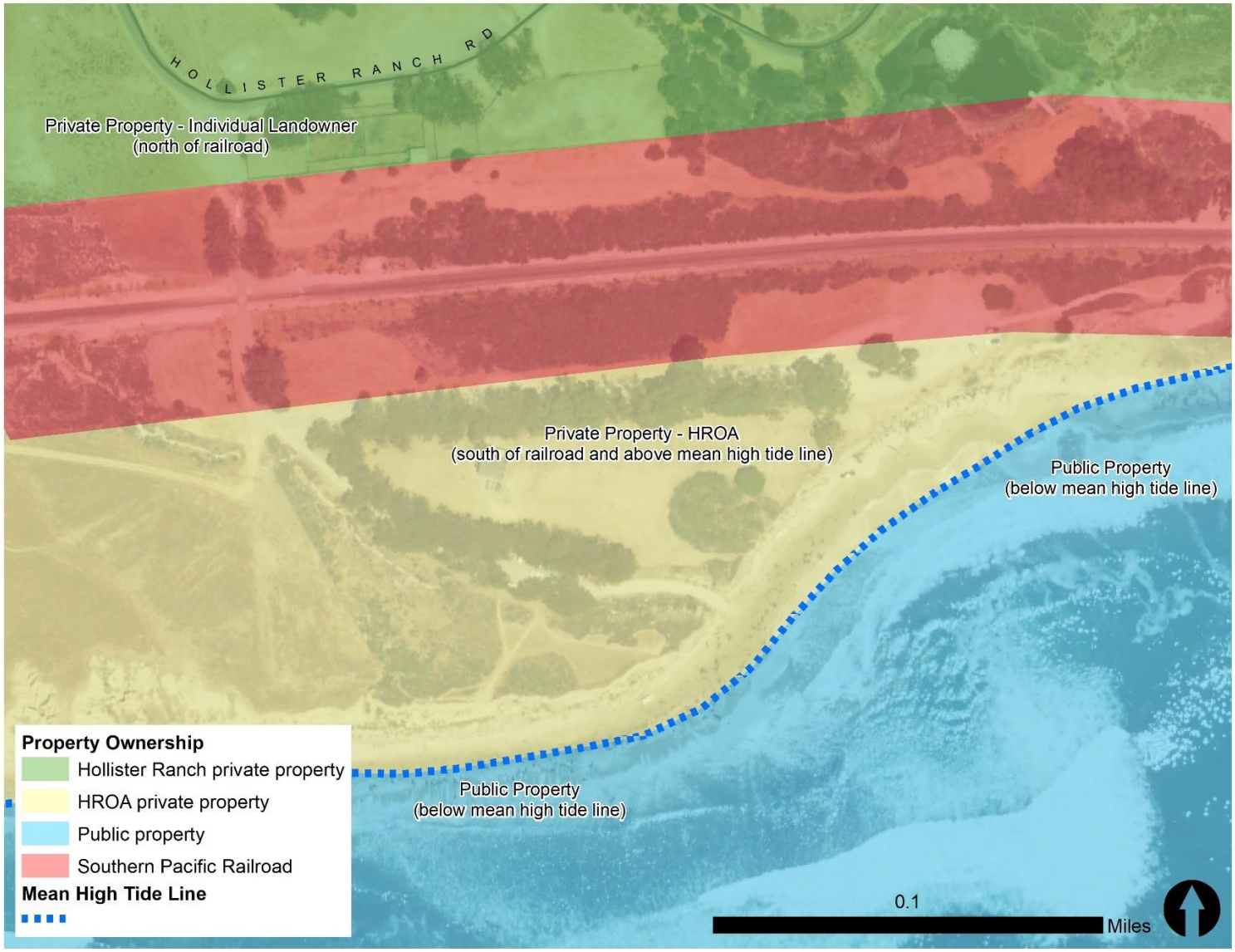


Figure 3. Public and private property at San Augustin.

Biological Resources

Vegetation

This section covers vegetation communities that were mapped by a consultant biologist through interpretation of recent (2018) aerial photography. The mapping covers eastern Hollister Ranch from the boundary with Gaviota State Park to the Sacate beach access point, for the area northward 200 feet of Rancho Real Road; southward to the top of the bluff; and excluding the bluff face and railroad property (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Similar data is not available for the western half of the property.

Coastal Sage Scrub: Hollister Ranch supports a wide diversity of species which fall under the category of coastal sage scrub plants. California sagebrush (Artemisia californica) is generally considered the most dominant member of this plant community, but other species can also be dominant, such as purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), giant wild rye (*Elymus condensatus*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum californica*).

Two somewhat distinct subtypes of coastal sage scrub occur in this region – quailbush scrub and coyote brush scrub. Quailbush scrub is dominated by quailbush (*Atriplex lentiformes*) but also supports some uncommon species such as wooly seablite (*Sueda taxifolia*) and cliff aster (*Malacothrix saxatilis var. saxatilis*) and occurs in small patches on highly erosive cliffs. Coyote brush scrub can sometimes be exclusively comprised of coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and is often associated with moist areas along drainages and estuaries.

Coastal Sage Scrub/Grasslands: Transition zones between relatively pure stands of coastal sage scrub and grasslands occupy significant areas here along the coast. These areas are characterized by having scattered shrubs, often including California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) or species of goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii* and *Hazardia squarosa*), along with high concentrations of introduced Mediterranean grasses such as soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*).

Annual and Perennial Grasslands: Typically found on south facing slopes with clay soils, the various genres of grasslands at Hollister Ranch harbor a wide variety of grasses and forbs, including the endangered Gaviota tarplant (*Deinandra increscens* ssp. *villosa*). Several populations of Gaviota tarplant have been documented along this stretch of coast and much of the coastal terrace habitat is designated critical habitat for this rare species. Heavily grazed grassland areas tend to support a lower diversity of plant species and are dominated by introduced annual species including wild oats (*Avena* spp.), soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), ripgut brome (*Bromes diandrus*), and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*).

Perennial grasslands tend to support a higher diversity of plant life than annual grasslands and are dominated by native species. Typified by the presence of needle grasses (*Stipa pulchra* or *Stipa lepida*) and California barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum* ssp. *californicum*), perennial grasslands can support many species including big grindelia (*Grindelia camporum*), blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*), and soaproot (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*).

Figure 4. Native and non-native vegetation communities on eastern Hollister Ranch.

Oak Woodlands: Protected canyon floors and hillsides with deep loamy soils, along with north facing slopes, are where coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) woodlands are most often found on the Ranch. Other common species in this community, aside from the coast live oak, include poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), and coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*).

Riparian Scrub: The lower reaches of the streams feeding into the Pacific Ocean here are most often dominated by thickets of arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), interrupted by other riparian species including the western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*), and red willow (*Salix laevigata*).

Critical Habitat and Special-Status Species

Table 1 lists the special-status species observed within three miles of Hollister Ranch. Note that this list is not inclusive of all special-status species within the Hollister Ranch; since the Ranch is on private land, there has been minimal research on species on the Ranch. It is likely the Ranch has more designated critical habitat than that mapped by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Designated critical habitat is defined by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as:

- Specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species at the time of listing that contain physical or biological features essential to conservation of the species and that may require special management considerations or protection; and
- Specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species if the agency determines that the area itself is essential for conservation.

Figure 5 shows the designated critical habitat found on Hollister Ranch.

Special-Status Plants: One rare plant taxon is known to occur within the Ranch. Designated critical habitat for the state and federally endangered Gaviota tarplant (*Deinandra increscens* ssp. *villosa;* Table 1) is present throughout the coastal plain, generally extending from the ocean to anywhere from 750-1,500 feet inland, into the foothills. Populations of Gaviota tarplant have been documented throughout Hollister Ranch, with most incidences occurring on the coastal terraces and plains.

Special-status Wildlife: Numerous special-status vertebrate species have a potential to exist within certain locations of the Ranch. All aquatic and riparian species including coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*), western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*), and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) are likely to occur within two beach access points at Alegria Beach and Agua Caliente Beach. Both beaches have perennial water that flows through the canyons to the ocean, creating a wetland environment near the beach. Some of the species listed above cannot survive in brackish environments and would be found further upstream where the water is less saline. These species have a potential to be impacted in their breeding or upland habitat by increased public access or domestic animals if allowed on beaches. Note

Table 1. Special-status species CDFW records within 3 miles of Hollister Ranch.

Taxon Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	State Status	Rare Plant Rank	CDFW Status	Other Status
Amphibians	*Taricha torosa*	Coast Range newt	None	None		SSC	
Amphibians	*Rana draytonii*	California red-legged frog	Threatened	None		SSC	
Amphibians	*Rana boylii*	foothill yellow-legged frog	None	Candidate Threatened		SSC	USFS_S
Birds	*Falco mexicanus*	prairie falcon	None	None		WL	USFWS_BCC
Dicots	*Deinandra increscens* ssp. *villosa*	Gaviota tarplant	Endangered	Endangered	1B.1		
Dicots	*Arctostaphylos purissima*	La Purisima manzanita	None	None	1B.1		
Dicots	*Arctostaphylos refugioensis*	Refugio manzanita	None	None	1B.2		USFS_S
Dicots	*Horkelia cuneata* var. *puberula*	mesa horkelia	None	None	1B.1		USFS_S
Dicots	*Scrophularia atrata*	black-flowered figwort	None	None	1B.2		
Dicots	*Astragalus didymocarpus var. milesianus*	Miles' milk-vetch	None	None	1B.2		
Dicots	*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*	Davidson's saltscale	None	None	1B.2		
Fish	*Eucyclogobius newberryi*	tidewater goby	Endangered	None		SSC	
Insects	*Danaus plexippus pop. 1*	monarch - California overwintering population	None	None		SA	USFS_S
Mammals	*Taxidea taxus*	American badger	None	None		SSC	
Mammals	*Antrozous pallidus*	pallid bat	None	None		SSC	USFS_S; WBWG_H
Monocots	*Calochortus fimbriatus*	late-flowered mariposa-lily	None	None	1B.3		USFS_S
Reptiles	*Emys marmorata*	western pond turtle	None	None		SSC	USFS_S
Reptiles	*Thamnophis hammondii*	two-striped gartersnake	None	None		SSC	USFS_S

Ranking Definitions

USFWS_ BCC= United States Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern
USFS_S= United States Forest Service Sensitive
CDFW SSC= California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern
CDFW WL= California Department of Fish and Wildlife Watch List
CDFW SA= California Department of Fish and Wildlife Special Animal
WBWG_H= Western Bat Working Group High Priority

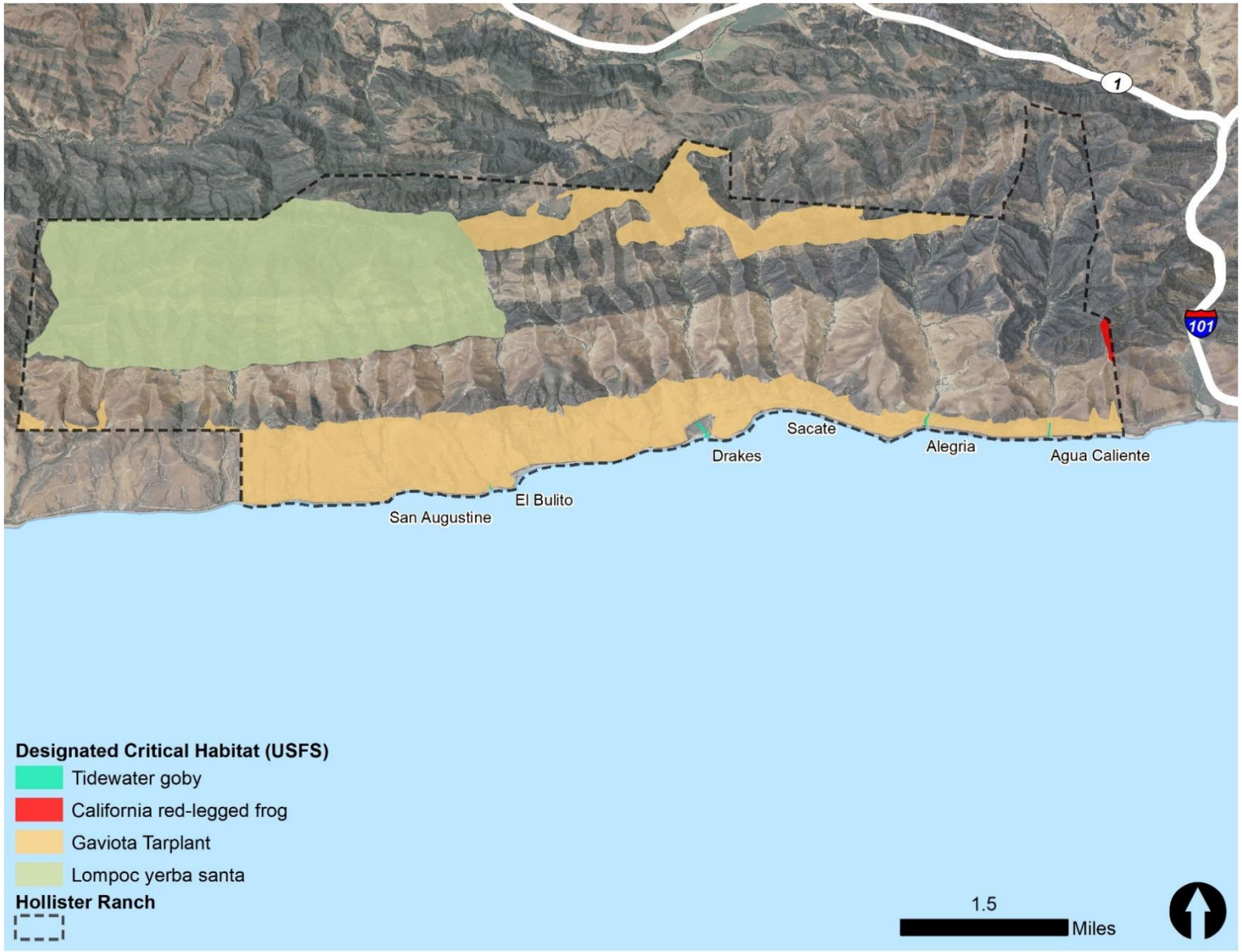


Figure 5. Designated Critical Habitat on Hollister Ranch.

that it is expert opinion that foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylii*) was extirpated from this area in the late 1970s due to disease and extreme flooding/scouring events (CNDDB 2020).

The overwintering monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) is expected to use all the eucalyptus groves on the Ranch (Figure 4) during its seasonal migration. This butterfly is commonly found in this habitat throughout coastal Santa Barbara County.

Special-status bird species are expected to be on the Ranch during migration as well as during nesting season, using the riparian habitat, chaparral habitat, or beach habitat. California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*; Federal and State Endangered) and western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*; Federally threatened) are both beach nesting birds that may use coastal bluff locations for foraging or nesting.

Geological Conditions

Slope

The Hollister Ranch coastline is characterized by pronounced steep coastal bluffs approximately 10 to 100 feet tall (Figure 6). High and steep coastal bluffs are most prominent in eastern Hollister Ranch (Figure 7), though all beaches have bluffs of some height. Inland, eastern Hollister Ranch (Agua Caliente, Alegria, and Sacate) is characterized by coastal canyons with steep walls ending nearly at the ocean, and that are traversed by Rancho Real Road. (Figure 8). Western Hollister Ranch (Drake's, Bulito, and San Augustin) has rolling plains with steep canyons set north of Rancho Real Road.

Soil Erodibility

High, moderate, and low soil erodibility is classified based on the k-factor of soils. Highly erodible soils indicate higher loam content, whereas low erodibility indicates more clay content. Soil erodibility is variable throughout the coastal region of Hollister Ranch (Figure 9). Data shown in the figure do not capture the erodibility of coastal bluffs, though these bluffs are highly erosive. Based on anecdotal evidence, coastal bluffs at San Augustin are considered to experience the most erosion of all Hollister Ranch beaches (Figure 10).

Cultural and Tribal Resources

The Chumash people historically inhabited what is now Hollister Ranch. A comprehensive survey of cultural resources on the Ranch has not been shared with the planning team. A search of university records provided by Chumash representatives show that in all of Santa Barbara County, 692 Chumash sites occurred with one-half mile of the coastline. At the time of European settlement, there were several Chumash villages along the Hollister Ranch coastline. The coastline near Point Conception is of special cultural significance to the Chumash due to its proximity to Point Conception. San Augustin – the westernmost of Hollister Ranch beaches – is approximately seven shoreline miles from Point Conception.

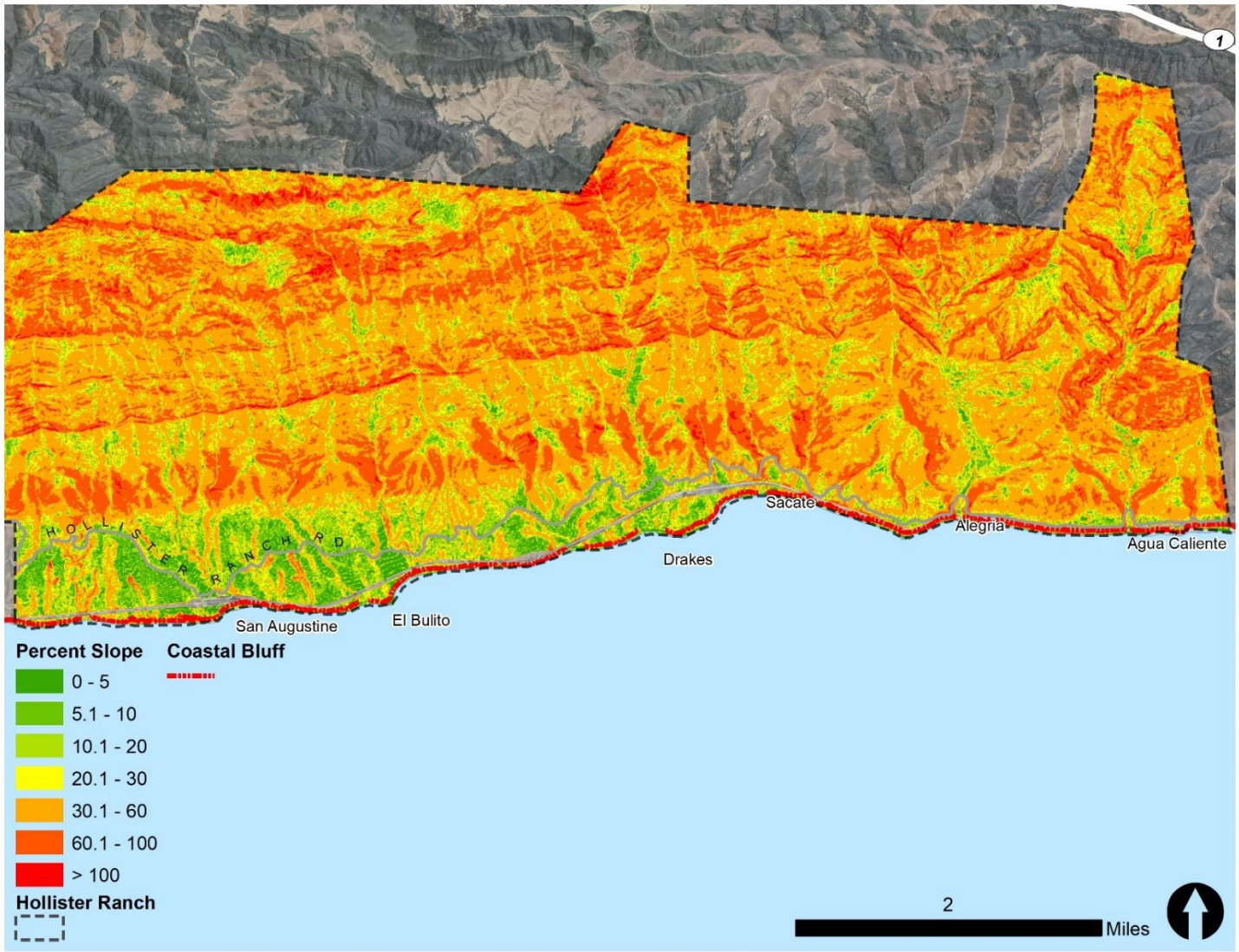


Figure 6. Hillslope on Hollister Ranch.

Figure 7. Steep coastal bluffs at Alegria.

Figure 8. Canada de Alegria - a steep-sided coastal canyon crossed by a railroad trestle. Rip rap and a deteriorated seawall protect the bottom of the bluff. Photo credit: Copyright ©2002-2021 Kenneth and Gabrielle Adelman, California Coastal Records Project, www.CaliforniaCoastline.org.

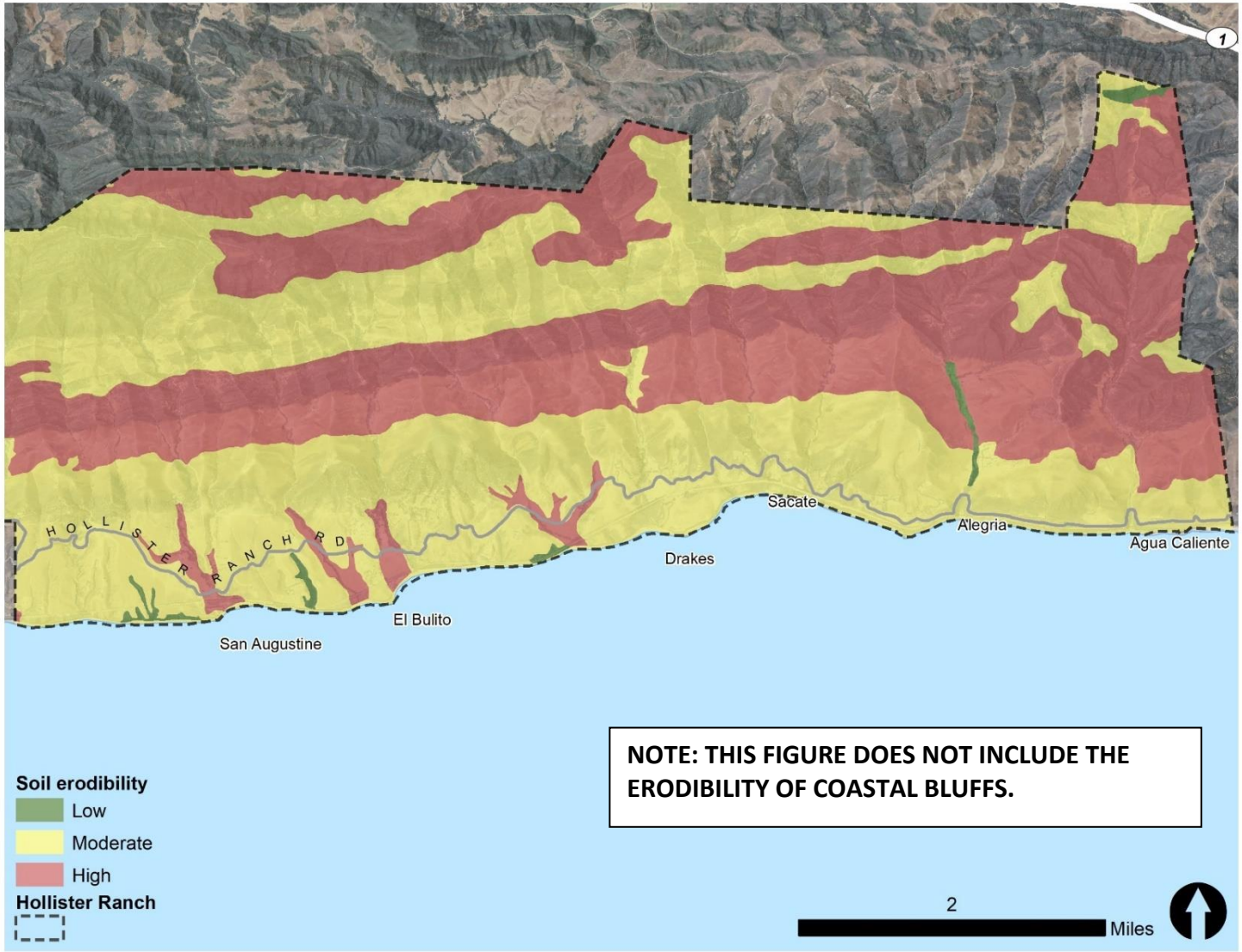


Figure 9. Soil erodibility on Hollister Ranch.

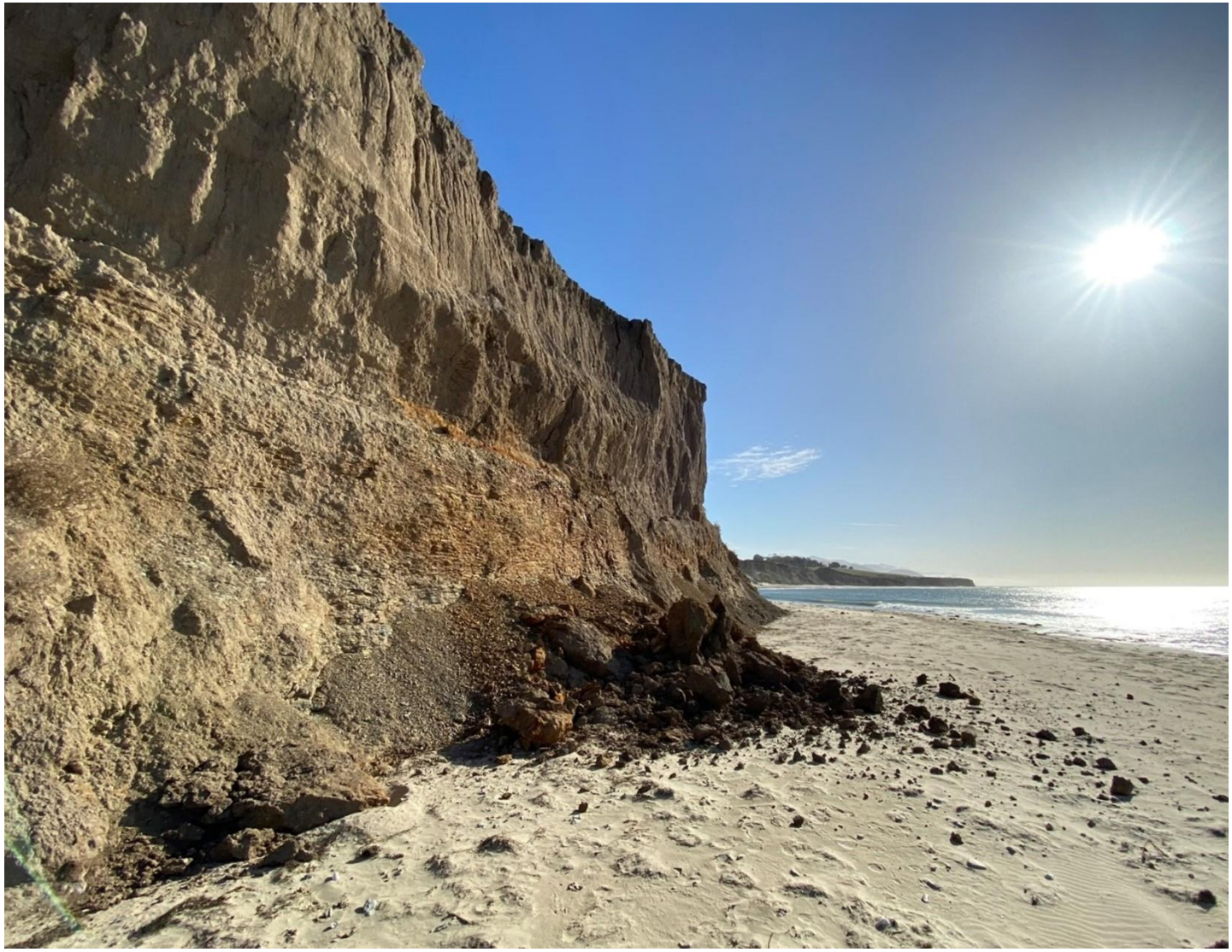


Figure 10. Bluff erosion at San Augustin.

Existing Access to Public Shoreline

Overland access

Overland access to public shoreline adjacent to Hollister Ranch is currently only safely possible via Rancho Real Road, and available only to landowners and guests of landowners, and or with special permission by organized nonprofit and educational groups. Types of HROA-permitted and guided visitor group activities include school tidepool tours at Alegria and surf days at Bulito. University research access to the Alegria tide pools is managed by the HROA; monitoring locations and transects used by researchers are accessible only at very low or negative tides.

Shoreline access

Walk-in shoreline access from Gaviota State Park to the public shoreline adjacent to Hollister Ranch is governed by tide levels and is only possible at very low or negative tides. There are two rocky points within 0.75 miles west of the Gaviota State Park pier that pose a particular problem for shoreline access. At mean sea level (2.66 feet in NAVD88) or lower tides with high surf conditions, walk-in access around these two points is difficult, but possible if you do not mind getting a little wet. At higher tides, regardless of wave size, it is impossible to walk around these two points.

Depending on the sand levels that vary with season, beach travel between these two coastal barriers can be relatively easy on a wide sandy beach, or more difficult across slanted, jagged, and/or slick rock. Typically, sand is more widespread on the beaches in summer months and eroded in winter months to expose underlying rock. Escaping incoming tides by going up the bluff is not possible along this part of the coastline.

Boat-in Access

Boat-in access is possible, with common beach launch locations at Gaviota State Park and Refugio State Beach, or trailered launch at Santa Barbara Harbor. The boat hoist on the Gaviota State Park pier is currently inoperable.

Challenges for Public Access

Private Property and Liability

As described above, before overland public access can occur to the public shoreline at any access point on Hollister Ranch, property rights or agreements over the Rancho Real Road must be obtained by the State or a management agency. This will involve negotiation with the HROA and individual private landowners.

The potential liability of non-owner access to Hollister Ranch is a key concern for Ranch owners. Currently all Ranch visitors must sign a release of liability, assumption of risk, and

indemnification agreement. Ranch owners will require similar protection from liability related to public access to the shoreline.

Road Conditions

The speed limit on Rancho Real Road is 25 miles per hour. There are many grade changes and sharp turns that require slower speeds (Figure 11), and there is no road signage for these hazards. Higher speeds are possible for long stretches. Along the road, there are other potential hazards such as: cattle grates (a metal grate level with the road surface that has fencing on either side); private driveways or road turnoffs (both paved and dirt roads providing access up canyons and to individual parcels); a narrow wooden bridge (wide enough for one vehicle to cross safely at a time); a road split (2-lane road divides into two single travel lanes and rejoins a short distance later) (Figure 42 and 13).

Travel Distances

Table 2 shows the travel distances along Rancho Real Road from the Gaviota State Park day-use parking lot. Distance is a major barrier to any potential visitor travel along Rancho Real Road, both vehicular and non-vehicular. Travel modes shown in Table 2 do not assume that any given mode will be part of an adopted access program.

Table 2: Approximate Travel Time from Gaviota State Park day-use lot (in minutes, one-way)

Beach	Miles (One-way)	Walk	Bike	E-Bike	Car	Shuttle
Agua Caliente	1.7	41	10	9	7	7
Alegria	2.9	70	17	13	12	12
Sacate	4.8	115	29	22	19	21
Drake’s	5.8	131	35	27	23	25
Bulito	8.2	197	49	38	33	35
San Augustin	9.8	235	59	45	39	42

For vehicular travelers, increased distance on Rancho Real Road brings increased likelihood of encountering cattle or wildlife, and an increased number of intersections with private driveways, roads, and their associated private property.

Non-vehicular travelers along Rancho Real Road would experience the same challenges and dangers, and only a small percentage of the public would be willing or able to travel the distance to even the closest beach on foot or bike (Agua Caliente, 1.7 miles one-way from Gaviota State Park day-use).

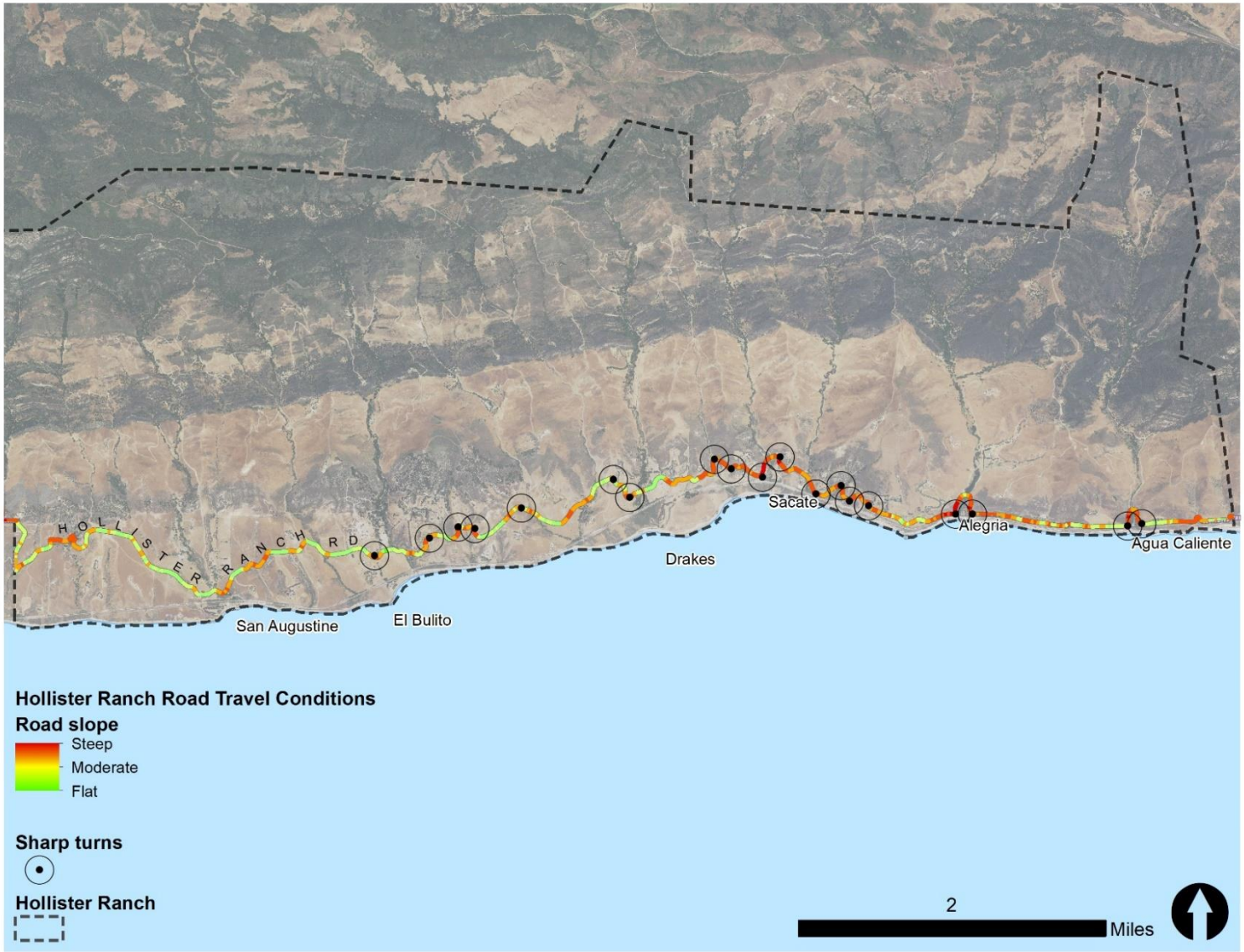


Figure 11. Travel conditions on Rancho Real Road

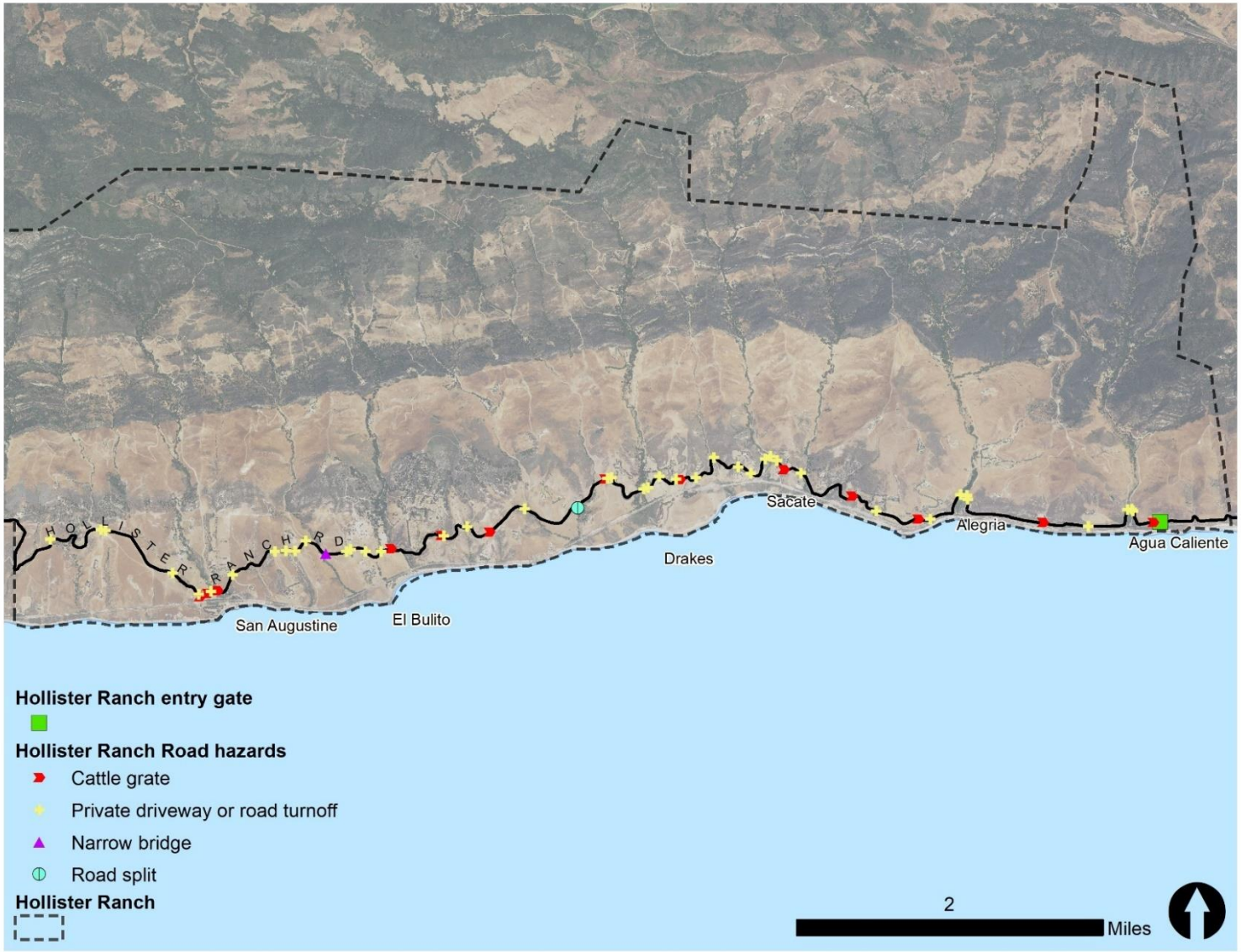


Figure 4. Travel hazards on Rancho Real Road

Figure 5. Narrow wooden bridge on Rancho Real Road near San Augustin.

Cattle Operation

Hollister Ranch is a Williamson Act agricultural preserve, which grants landowners tax benefits for maintaining land in agricultural use. To qualify for the Williamson Act, an agricultural preserve must be no less than 100 acres. All parcels on Hollister Ranch are operated together as one cattle operation across parcel boundaries with supporting infrastructure throughout the Ranch (Figure 14). The Hollister Ranch Cattle Cooperative runs a cow-calf cattle operation that overwinters an average of 1,200-1,500 cattle annually. These cattle are shipped out in May or June. An additional approximately 400 cattle are year-round residents on the ranch. This results in an estimated maximum of 1,600 -1,900 cattle on the Ranch from late fall or early winter to late spring or early summer.

Distinct grazing pastures are identified by the cattle cooperative for managing grazing. But the grazing pastures are not fenced off from Rancho Real Road. It is not unusual to find cattle adjacent to or on Rancho Real Road. When moving from pasture to pasture, the cattle are driven by wranglers on horses assisted by herding dogs. On these days, the cattle can block the road for significant lengths of time.

Cattle on Hollister Ranch pose a challenge to public access in several ways.

1. Cattle are a threat to visitors who may disturb or provoke aggression from bulls or from cows protecting calves due to lack of fences and general free-range nature of the cattle.
2. Cattle on the road are a road hazard to drivers not expected cattle, through car-cattle collisions, or from people in cars who may disturb or provoke aggression from cattle.
3. Schedule and duration of cattle on road could block access for periods of time.
4. Cattle grates across roads may be a hazard to bicyclists or act as pinch points for vehicle traffic.
5. Holding pastures for bulls are adjacent to beach access at Drake’s, Bulito, and San Augustin creating a possible safety hazard for visitors (Figure 75).

Sensitive Biological Resources at Beach Access Points

Reconnaissance-level surveys were performed on April 9, 2021, for the six beach access points at Hollister Ranch. Reconnaissance surveys identify potential environmentally sensitive habitat areas, record incidental observations, and evaluate a broad array of site characteristics.

Agua Caliente

The narrow canyon at Agua Caliente (Cañada de Agua Caliente) is bridged by a railroad trestle near the coastal bluff and is vegetated with coast sage scrub growing above arroyo willow thickets (*Salix lasiolepis* Shrubland Alliance) that dominate the banks of the stream. Steep and unstable bluffs flank the canyon mouth along the beach. The bottom of the bluff is armored with rock riprap and a deteriorated seawall.

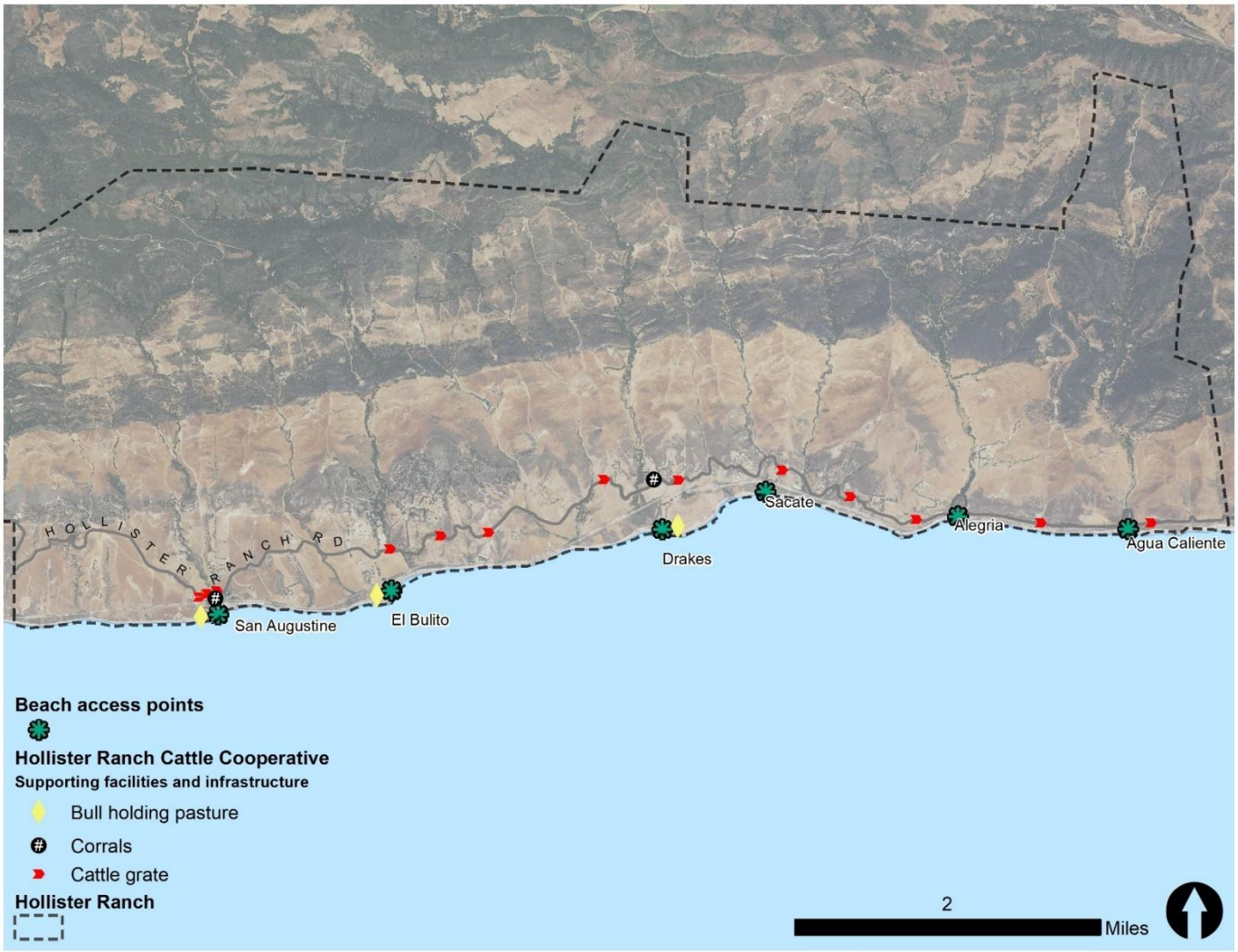


Figure 6. Facilities and infrastructure that support the Hollister Ranch Cattle Cooperative

Figure 7. Gate to bull holding pasture at San Augustin.

The beach at Agua Caliente has a narrow intertidal zone, the area between high tide and low tide (also known as the foreshore or littoral zone). Rockweed (*Selvitia compresa*) is present in the mid-intertidal zone on Agua Caliente beach and could be significantly impacted by trampling when people are exploring the intertidal zone. Despite being a long-lived species, *Silvetia* is slow-growing, experiences irregular recruitment and has low survival rates. Silvetia is an important biogenic species in the mid-intertidal zone as it is highly productive, provides a source of food for many grazers, and forms habitat for a diverse assemblage, supporting over 111 seaweed and invertebrate taxa in southern California.

Alegria

Very similar to Agua Caliente, the narrow canyon at Alegria (Cañada de Alegria) is bridged by a railroad trestle near the coastal bluff and is vegetated with relatively undisturbed coast sage scrub growing above arroyo willow thickets (*Salix lasiolepis* Shrubland Alliance) that dominate the banks of the stream. Steep and unstable bluffs flank the canyon mouth along the beach. The bottom of the bluff is armored with rock riprap and a degraded seawall.

Silvetia is highly abundant in the mid-intertidal zone on Alegria Beach and could be significantly impacted by tide pool exploration by visitors.

Sacate

Relatively undisturbed coastal sage scrub dominates the blufftops south of the railroad and needlegrass grasslands are present. The intertidal zone at Sacate is wider than beaches to the east. Noteworthy dune habitat is present on the eastern side of this beach.

Drake's

The width of the intertidal zone at Drake's Beach is wider than the three beaches to the east. There is an estuary system at the mouth of Cañada de Santa Anita west of the Drake's beach access points. This estuary is the largest of any of the beaches surveyed and can support many rare taxa because of the large backshore area – that is, land above high tide but below bluffs.

Bulito

The blufftops above Bulito Beach support coastal sage scrub plant communities, annual grasslands, perennial grasslands, and eucalyptus woodlands. The intertidal zone at this location is wider than all beaches to the east.

A notable perennial grassland dominated by purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) is present on the blufftops east of a stand of relatively undisturbed coyote brush scrub. Needle grass – Melic grass grasslands are considered a vulnerable plant community.

San Augustin

The blufftops above San Augustin Beach support coastal sage scrub plant communities, annual grasslands, perennial grasslands, and eucalyptus woodlands. Sections of native coastal sage scrub and perennial grasslands are relatively intact and have the potential to support many sensitive taxa. This beach has the widest intertidal zone, the area between high tide and low tide (also known as the foreshore or littoral zone) of any of the beaches surveyed.

Based on the reconnaissance-level biological survey outlined above, review of previous survey work, and observations of facilities at each beach access point, potential visitor capacities are lowest for Agua Caliente Beach and Alegria Beach, medium for Sacate Beach and Drakes Beach, and highest for Bulito Beach and San Augustin Beach. These relative capacities are based on perceived threats to sensitive resources and availability of space to safely recreate away from these resources. Utilization and enhancement of existing facilities is encouraged to minimize new impacts.

Emergency Response

Lack of cell phone coverage and remote travel conditions create dangerous conditions in the event of an emergency. Cell phone coverage is currently limited for most coastal locations at Hollister Ranch. Individuals may not be able to contact emergency responders or receive emergency care in a timely fashion. The Hollister Ranch manager and other employees currently respond to emergency calls when notified.

Lack of Water and Sewer Infrastructure

HROA-owned facilities at Drake's, Bulito, and San Augustin beaches have electricity, running water, flushing toilets, and septic systems. Agua Caliente, Alegria, and Sacate have portable toilets. Water supply is limited in the region. Sewer infrastructure is non-existent at these beach access locations, which are instead served by septic tank and leach fields.

Program Objectives

Eight overarching objectives have been defined for the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP). These objectives constitute the goals of the HRCAP.

- Objective 1: Provide safe, equitable and inclusive access.
- Objective 2: Provide options for experiences that meet the interests of a broad range of Californians.
- Objective 3: Provide increased access within one year of program approval by Coastal Commission.
- Objective 4: Minimize impacts in order to protect coastal resources, including natural habitats, cultural resources, and agricultural operations.
- Objective 5: Respect private property rights.
- Objective 6: Implement the laws and policies of Santa Barbara County, the State of California, and the Federal Government.
- Objective 7: Define process for assessing long-term effectiveness of HRCAP in achieving program objectives.
- Objective 8: Assess implementation challenges of program components and identify strategies for potential solutions.

Vision

Members of the public from a broad range of communities have expressed that the Hollister Ranch coastline offers a unique experience along this portion of the State's coast. The undeveloped and ruggedness of the coastline, the high quality of the natural environment and the surf, and the lack of crowds are all aspects that make the Hollister beach experience special. In addition, this part of the Gaviota Coast is very important culturally and spiritually to the Chumash people. The vision for the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program is to provide public access to the beaches along the Hollister Ranch coastline and to do it in a way that 1) preserves the qualities that make a visit to the ranch beaches a unique and memorable experience and 2) ensures equitable access to the beaches.

Beaches and Activities

The six beaches along the Hollister Ranch coastline vary in terms of the length and width of beach, the beach substrate (varying from sand to rock), quality of the surf, habitats found along the beach, nearshore habitats, room for parking and amenities and other factors. These different characteristics make the beaches suitable for different activities as summarized in Table 3.

Due to the sensitive intertidal habitats at Alegria beach, the HRCAP will limit access to this beach to guided access. Additional management measures may be taken to protect the estuary resources at Agua Caliente, Alegria, and Drake's beaches.

Table 3: Beach Suitability for Different Beach Experiences

Beach Activities	Best Beach Conditions for Activity	Agua Caliente	Alegria	Sacate	Drakes	El Bulito	San Augustin
Beach walking or jogging	Wide, sandy, linear beach	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
General beach play / relaxation	Wide, sandy beach	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
Surfing	Quality waves	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
Tide pooling	Linear beach access to tide pools	Low	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Bird watching	Range of conditions available, wetlands	High	High	High	High	High	High
School or other guided trip for outdoor education	Linear beach access to tide pools or other natural features of interest	Low	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Shoreline fishing	Range of conditions available	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Scuba diving / snorkeling	Vehicle access with parking	Low	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Staffing/Program Management Options

The Coastal Act calls for the State Coastal Conservancy to use its authority to implement the HRCAP and the Coastal Conservancy controls some of the money currently available for the program. The Coastal Act also provides that the Conservancy may enter into agreements with partners to provide for operation and maintenance of the access. The Coastal Conservancy is not a land management or public access management agency and lacks the expertise, staff, and resources to operate and manage the HRCAP. Therefore, the Coastal Conservancy, working in partnership with the rest of the State Agency Team, will need to identify a public agency, nonprofit organization, and/or concessionaire to manage the overall program. This organization will be referred to as the Management Entity.

There are many ways that partnership with other organizations could be used to augment the capacity of the Management Entity. For instance, if the Management Entity provides the shuttle, local recreation or environmental groups might be willing to organize guided trips for the general public. In addition, nonprofit organizations, community groups and others could provide guided access to the specific communities that they serve through a group permit system. If community interest in access is high, then a volunteer group such as “friends of Hollister Ranch Coastal Access” might evolve to help provide access.

The Managing Agency could also enter into concessionaire contracts with businesses to provide guided trips into the Hollister Ranch beaches. Concessionaires would charge for participation in their access tours which raises questions about equitable access. Concessionaire contracts could include requirements to address this. For example, a contract could require that a certain percentage of spaces be reserved at a lower-cost for participants of the Cal-Fresh program.

General Infrastructure Needs

Different access components (discussed later in this document) will require different types of infrastructure. Some components could begin with very little infrastructure other than portable restrooms. Below is a general list of the types of infrastructure that would be needed over time to fully implement the program.

1. Transportation equipment and improvements
2. Restrooms/Sanitation
3. Garbage and Recycling
4. Emergency communications
5. Road/Trails (includes signage, improvements)
6. Parking Facilities
7. Reservation System

General Operations and Maintenance

The Management Entity will need to develop more specific plans for implementing the HRCAP. Key elements of the operations and maintenance will include:

1. Establish access rules and implement education and enforcement.
2. Develop educational materials to encourage best practices during visits such as "leave no trace," designated public access areas, and giving social distancing to wildlife.
3. Develop and implement reservation system and group and research permit programs.
4. Establish training materials and minimum requirements for guided access and research programs.
5. Develop and implement a cattle operation communication plan.
6. Establish a natural and cultural resource management program to minimize impacts.
7. Establish a framework and partnerships for baseline assessments and monitoring.
8. Maintain facilities including roads, trails, parking areas, restrooms, water and trash and recycling capacity.
9. Develop a Public Safety plan including emergency communications and response protocols for patrol, enforcement, traffic control, medical emergency, aquatic safety, fire and evacuation plans.

Access Components

One of the most challenging aspects of providing public access to the public beaches along the Hollister Ranch coastline is getting people safely through the private ranch property and active cattle operation to the beaches. Once at the beach, it is relatively easy to provide a variety of different experiences for visitors.

In order to address the unusual circumstances of getting to the beaches, the HRCAP is organized by the different access modes, each of which has its own opportunities and challenges. The four access modes included in the HRCAP are:

1. Shuttle-based Access
2. Trail-based Access
3. Bicycle-based Access
4. Drive-In Access

Potential Experiences
Beach Relaxation and Ocean Play
Beach Walking
Surfing
Coastal Biking
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Cultural Activities
Other Beach Activities

In addition, there is component of the program specifically for Chumash Cultural Access, which is described below.

Some of the other big challenges of the HRCAP are how to provide public access that is safe, minimizes impacts to the high quality coastal resources, and ensures that private property rights are respected. Guided access is one way to address many of these challenges. For each of the access modes, the HRCAP calls for both guided access and independent access options. There is more information about guided versus independent access below.

Each of the access components is summarized below. For each component, there is a preliminary assessment of the access component relative to the five program objectives specifically related to the design of the program. For each assessment, the first objective has been divided into its three distinct parts: safe, equitable and inclusive access. Please note, for this analysis, inclusive access is assessed relative to physical inclusivity – how well could people with a range of physical abilities be served by the component. In the HRCAP, cultural inclusivity is considered as part of equitable access.

Safe	Provide safe, equitable and inclusive access.
Equitable	
Inclusive	
Experiences	Provide options for experiences that meet the interests of a broad range of Californians.
One-Year	Provide increased access within one year of program approval by Coastal Commission.
Minimize	Minimize impacts in order to protect coastal resources, including natural habitats, cultural resources, and agricultural operations.
Respect	Respect private property rights.

Each access component is rated on the risk of not achieving that objective. There is a four point scale:

- Little or No Risk
- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- Not Likely to Achieve

Please note on the assessment for providing access within one-year for each component, the left-half of the circle is colored red. This reflects the fact that no access can be provided until the State has acquired a public access right on Rancho Real Road which could be difficult to achieve within one year. The other half of the circle reflects the assessment for providing access within one-year without regard to the property right issue.

Guided and Independent Access

Guided access refers to group access where there is at least one group leader (the "guide") that is familiar with the Hollister Ranch property, trained in how to minimize impacts to coastal resources, and informed on safety and emergency communication protocols. The "guided" activity can be any of the experiences listed above. Guided access could be provided to the general public, or to specific groups through a group-use permit system. The use of a guide is one way to reduce the safety and environmental risks of associated access to the ranch beaches; therefore, guided access can be implemented with less management and infrastructure improvements in place. The main downside of group access is that people are restricted to the group's timing and activity. In addition, the ability to provide guided access depends on the availability of paid or volunteer guides.

Independent access provides the greatest flexibility for users. However, a variety of additional management measures such as signage, fencing, pre-visit educational material, road improvements, and communication tools may need to be implemented before independent access can be provided.

Shuttle-Based Access

Using a shuttle to transport people into the Hollister Ranch beaches would address several access concerns:

- Safety – Shuttle-drivers would be familiar with the multiple potential hazards along Rancho Real Road including the road itself, conflicts with the cattle operation, and the railroad crossings. Using experienced drivers would greatly reduce these safety risks.
- Inclusive Access – The distance to the closest Hollister Ranch beach from Gaviota State Park is 1.7 miles and it is almost 10 miles to the westernmost beach. For many people, it is too physically challenging (or un-appealing) to walk or bike to these beaches. Use of a shuttle would allow people with a much broader range of physical abilities to access the Hollister beaches.

Potential Experiences
Beach Relaxation and Ocean Play
Beach Walking
Surfing
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Cultural Activities
Other Beach Activities

- Minimize Impacts to Coastal Resources – Using a shuttle would minimize conflicts with the cattle operation and would require minimal improvements to the road. In addition, the time that people are riding on the shuttle presents an excellent opportunity to view the scenery, as well as to educate people about the unique resources along the Hollister coastline and visitor practices to minimize impacts such as "leave no trace" and keeping distance from wildlife.
- Respect Private Property – Transporting people through the ranch to the beaches on a shuttle is the best way to ensure that public visitors remain in the beach areas and do not stray inland to private portions of the ranch.

Very little infrastructure improvements would be needed to implement shuttle-based access, particularly guided access.

The key drawback to shuttle-based access is the cost of operating the shuttle. Even in State Parks with very high visitor numbers, user fees are generally not sufficient to cover costs of the shuttle system. One key consideration for equitable access will be the cost of the shuttle system. To ensure equity, the shuttle must either be free or low-cost or there must be a free/low-cost option for low-income visitors. Note, however, that a free or low-cost shuttle will result in higher net operating costs.

Shuttle-based Guided Access

Shuttle-based guided access would be provided from Gaviota State Park or other nearby staging areas. To ensure greater equity, free shuttle pickups would also be periodically arranged for northern Santa Barbara communities such as Guadalupe, Lompoc, and Santa Maria to bring people directly from their community to the Hollister beaches. These community pickups will be organized in coordination with local community groups to maximize community benefits and inclusivity. Pickups may be expanded to other environmental justice communities if the budget allows this. Community pickups may also be done in coordination with local public transit providers.

Beach-to-beach hiking is one of the many experiences that could be organized for shuttle-based guided access. The advantage of the shuttle is that people could be dropped off at one beach and be picked up at another.

Shuttle-based Independent Access

As discussed above, the Management Entity will have to implement additional management measures before providing independent access. In addition to those general measures, the Management Entity will have to address a few critical operational issues that are unique to shuttle system:

- Ensure that shuttle system can account for all visitors at end of day.
- Provide visitor management protocols to ensure that no visitors are left behind prior to closing.

Minimum Infrastructure

Less infrastructure would be needed to initiate guided shuttle access versus independent public access. The list below are things that might be needed but may not be necessary to get started.

1. Safety and directional signage
2. Temporary restrooms at one or more beaches
3. Trash and recycling receptacles – shuttle could potentially have
4. Shuttle drop off and pick up facilities

Assessment of Shuttle-based Access by Program Design Objectives

Shuttle-Based Access	Guide	Indep.
Safe	●	●
Equitable	●	○
Inclusive	●	●
Experiences	●	●
One-Year	◐	◐
Minimize	●	○
Respect	●	○

Bicycle-Based Access

Given the long-distance from the Hollister Ranch gate to the Hollister Ranch beaches, bicycle-based access could be feasible for a wider range of people than walk-in access. The biggest concern with bicycle-based access is safety along Rancho Real Road. The oftentimes steep and narrow road is very windy with several blind turns which increases the risk of conflicts with cars. Bikes also present a particular safety challenge relative to the cattle operation. Both cattle and horses can be spooked by a fast-moving, unexpected bicyclist. To address this, bicycle access to the ranch will need to be coordinated with the cattle operation and communicated with the Hollister Ranch owners. It is anticipated the bicycle access to the ranch would not be provided every day and may vary by season to reduce risk.

Potential Experiences
Beach Relaxation and Ocean Play
Beach Walking
Surfing
Coastal Biking
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Other Beach Activities

Initially bike-access would be provided through guided tours. This would make it easier to coordinate with the cattle operation and will

help identify areas where additional safety signage or other improvements may be needed. Independent bike access would begin after successful implementation of guided bike tours.

Minimum Infrastructure

1. Plan for cattle operation communications and coordination
2. Temporary restrooms at one or more beaches.
3. Trash and recycling receptacles
4. Before independent access: Safety and directional signage

Assessment of Bicycle-based Access by Program Design Objectives

Bicycle Access	Guide	Indep.
Safe		
Equitable		
Inclusive		
Experiences		
One-Year		
Minimize		
Respect		

Drive-In access

Visitors being able to drive in with their own car on their own schedule provides for the most flexibility and is the most physically inclusive. But this mode also has the most risk in terms of potential impacts to private property and coastal resources. In order to address this, more infrastructure and management controls will be needed, particularly for independent access. Drive-in access, both guided and independent, will be very important if the cost of a shuttle program is financially infeasible. Without one of these two options, access would be physically prohibitive for many people.

Even with a shuttle program, drive-in guided access might be desirable for some people or activities that require specialized equipment that would be difficult to bring on the shuttle or by bike. For instance, people with physical disabilities might need their own

Potential Experiences
Beach Relaxation and Ocean Play
Beach Walking
Surfing
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Cultural Activities
Other Beach Activities

car that is outfitted to address their physical challenges, or a kayak outing might have everyone driving in with their own kayak.

But driving in personal cars will require more directional and safety signage, parking spaces, traffic control and patrol etc. So even drive-in guided access is unlikely to occur in the first year.

Minimum Infrastructure

1. Parking
2. Temporary restrooms at one or more beaches
3. Trash and recycling receptacles
4. Safety and directional signage
5. Traffic Control patrol

Assessment of Drive-In Access by Program Design Objectives

Drive-In Access	Guide	Indep.
Safe	🟡	🟠
Equitable	🟡	🟡
Inclusive	🟢	🟢
Experiences	🟢	🟢
One-Year	🔴🟡	🔴
Minimize	🟢	🟠
Respect	🟢	🟠

Trail-based Access

Potential Experiences
Beach Relaxation and Ocean Play
Beach Walking
Surfing
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Other Beach Activities

A trail that would allow people to walk from the Hollister Ranch gate to the Hollister Ranch beaches is another access mode. If this path is developed as a multi-user trail, it could potentially also accommodate bikes and/or equestrian users. A trail would give people an up close experience of this rugged beautiful coastline. However, the round trip distance from the day use parking lot at Gaviota State Beach to Agua Caliente beach (closest beach) is approximately 3.5 miles. Given this, a trail will not be a feasible option for many people, even if a staging area is developed closer to the Hollister Ranch property line. Feasibility would increase if the trail accommodated bikes. Having bikes use the trail rather than the road would increase the safety of bike access and would likely reduce the potential conflicts between cyclists and the cattle operation.

There are two significant challenges to providing trail access to the Hollister Ranch beaches. First, additional property rights would need to be acquired from multiple individual landowners. The second is that the variable topography of the Hollister coastline and areas of high quality coastal habitats will make design and construction of the trail challenging. Both of these factors will make construction of a trail expensive. It is likely the Management Entity will choose to construct the trail in phases.

Allowing people to walk into the beaches guarantees a low-cost experience for the visitor. However given the remote location of the Gaviota coast in general, most or all visitors will have to drive their car from some distance and then park in order to walk the trail. That means that a car is needed to get to the area. Alternatively, free or public transportation would need to be provided directly to the trailhead.

Once a trail is constructed, docent led hikes could be provided from the trailhead to one or more of the beaches. By the time a trail is constructed, the program should have management controls in place to account for independent access. Therefore, independent trail-based access should be able to begin as soon as the trail is constructed.

Minimum Infrastructure

1. Trailhead with parking and map kiosk
2. Access trail

Assessment of Trail-based Access by Program Design Objectives

Trail-Based Access	Guide	Indep.
Safe	🟢	🟢
Equitable	🟡	🟡
Inclusive	🟠	🟠
Experiences	🟢	🟢
One-Year	🔴	🔴
Minimize	🟢	🟡
Respect	🟢	🟡

Chumash Cultural Access

An important component of the HRCAP is to provide cultural access to Hollister Ranch for the Chumash people. This would allow drive-in access for individual and group cultural activities. Access could also be provided as part of the shuttle program. This component of the program would be open to identified members of Chumash tribes recognized by the California Native American Heritage Commission. This component will have some rules associated with Chumash cultural practices that are different from the rules for other general public users. In addition, Chumash Cultural Access may provide unique access to agreed upon areas significant to the Chumash community.

Potential Experiences
Beach Walking
Nature Viewing
Environmental Education
Cultural Activities

The program will allow for individual and group access. Initially the cultural access program will be implemented using a guided access approach where there is one or more Chumash tribal representative(s) familiar with the property helping to lead the group.

The Chumash Cultural Access component is one piece in the effort to ensure the HRCAP provides equitable access.

Minimum Infrastructure

Less infrastructure would be needed to initiate this component. For longer term operation, the following would likely be needed:

1. Tribal coordination plan
2. Temporary restrooms at one or more beaches
3. Trash and recycling receptacles

4. Safety and directional signage

Assessment of Cultural Access by Program Design Objectives

Shuttle-Based Access	Cultural
Safe	
Equitable	
Inclusive	
Experiences	
One-Year	
Minimize	
Respect	

Research and Educational Opportunities

Science and Research Opportunities

Special access would be provided for science and research activities. This access would be coordinated with colleges and universities, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and natural and cultural resource professionals for specific permitted purposes. Permit conditions would require proof of research design standards and legitimacy; coordination of access with other public uses, rules, and regulations; and that study findings be shared with the Management Entity and the Coastal Conservancy. Emphasis would be on studies that help in the assessment of use and its impacts to assist with Adaptive Management decisions.

Educational and Interpretive Opportunities

Opportunities for education and interpretive access would be provided through the guided access tours and could be expanded through development of a volunteer docent program that could provide education and interpretive opportunities on the beaches or along the future access trail. Educational and interpretive information could also be part of an orientation program provided on the shuttles or via web and social media information sites.

Implementation Strategy

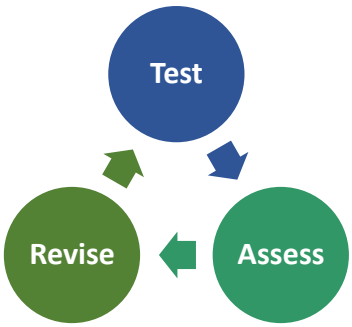
The implementation strategy for the HRCAP is based on an adaptive management approach. This means that rather than specify all of the details from the outset, the program will evolve

over time based on lessons learned, public interests, and management capacity. Implementation will largely be the responsibility of the Management Entity with oversight from the Coastal Conservancy.

The program calls for a two-phased implementation which is described below and of the creation of an HRCAP Advisory Committee which would provide input on the program assessment and adaptive management decisions.

Adaptive Management Approach

Adaptive Management is a test, assess, and then revise as needed approach to developing public access opportunities in balance with resource protection measures. It means that with each step in opening access, the step is evaluated for meeting the HRCAP Vision and Objectives. If one step is determined to not be consistent, then the step is modified and then re-evaluated and revised. That way, modifications to the steps are instituted along the way to reduce impacts and bring the step in line with the Vision and Objectives as soon as possible.



Phasing

The HRCAP will be implemented in two phases. The first phase will last for two years and will focus on testing out the various concepts for providing access into the Hollister coastline and managing the impacts of that access. The implementation strategy will be to start with limited guided access using shuttle or bikes. This access will provide important information on additional infrastructure that may be needed to optimize program outcomes.

The Managing Entity will then begin to increase the access opportunities by increasing the number of days that access is available, increasing the number of people allowed in on any given day, and/or allowing non-guided independent access. The specifics of how the program evolves will be driven by the outcomes of the initial testing, the available budget, and the interests of potential visitors. The Phase 1 Implementation Plan will specify an anticipated access trajectory for the first six months. Moving forward, the Managing Entity will use adaptive management to determine the type and amount of public access provided. The level of access provided will also be dependent on the available Operations and Management (O&M) budget.

Phase 1

Timeframe

- Two Years

Capacity

- Start small and increase
- Start with guided access and evolve to independent
- Maximum 100 people per day

Potential Access Components

- Shuttle-based guided access
- Shuttle-based independent access
- Bike tours guided access
- Bike independent access
- Drive-in tours guided access
- Drive-in independent access
- Chumash Cultural Access

Phase 2

Timeframe

- Starts at Year 3

Capacity

- Capacity will increase if there is demand, sufficient budget, and impacts minimized
- Maximum 500 people per day

Potential Components

- Continue Phase 1 components
- Develop Access Trail
- Trail-based guided access
- Trail-based independent access
- Invest in Infrastructure

HRCAP Advisory Committee

The Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program relies on the use of ongoing assessment and adaptative management to ensure that program objectives are met including providing safe, equitable and inclusive access while also minimizing impacts on coastal resources and private property. To help achieve this balance, an Advisory Committee that includes community participants with a diversity of backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives will be formed to help

advise program assessment and adaptive management changes. The advisory committee will meet as follows:

- At least quarterly during Phase 1.
- At least annually for first 5 years of Phase 2. The Advisory Committee would then make a recommendation for future committee activity.

Implementation Steps

Pre-Access Period

Several key things need to be accomplished before the public can begin to access the Hollister Ranch coastline. The main steps are as follows:

1. Obtain Public Access Rights to the Road
2. Identify the Managing Entity
3. Form the HRCAP Advisory Committee
4. Develop a Financial Plan
5. Develop Phase 1 Implementation Plan
6. Obtain Permits
7. Install Necessary Infrastructure

Obtain Public Access Rights to the Road

Lead: State Lands Commission

The beaches along the Hollister Ranch are public property, but there is no public roadway or trail to access those beaches. In order for the public to reach the beaches, public access rights must first be obtained along Rancho Real Road and the beach spur routes. This will require negotiation with the Hollister Ranch Owners Association and with individual landowners. It will also require funding to acquire the access rights.

Identify the Program Managing Entity

Lead: State Coastal Conservancy

The Coastal Act calls for the State Coastal Conservancy to implement the HRCAP and the Coastal Conservancy controls some of the money currently available for the program. However, the Conservancy is not a land management or public access management agency and lacks the expertise, staff, and resources to provide on-the-ground management of the HRCAP. Therefore, the Coastal Conservancy, working in partnership with the rest of the State Agency Team, will need to identify a public agency, nonprofit organization, or concessionaire to manage the program. It is anticipated that funding will be needed to compensate the Managing Entity for their work.

Form the HRCAP Advisory Committee

Lead: State Agency Team and Managing Entity

The HRCAP Advisory Committee will meet during the pre-access phase to provide input on the Phase 1 Implementation Plan. During Phase 1 of the HRCAP, the Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to assess the testing of access components and provide suggestions on how to maximize program outcomes. For the first five years of Phase 2, the Advisory Committee will meet at least annually. The committee can choose to meet more frequently if needed. After five years, the Advisory Committee will be asked to make a recommendation regarding its role for the next five years.

Final decisions on program implementation will be made by the Managing Entity in consultation with the Conservancy.

Develop a Financial Plan

Implementation of the HRCAP will require funding to compensate the Managing Entity and other contractors. The Coastal Conservancy currently has approximately $300,000 from payments by Hollister Ranch owners to the Hollister Ranch in-lieu fee program. These funds can only be used for the HRCAP. The County of Santa Barbara has an additional $500,000 restricted for public access at Hollister Ranch. The Managing Entity, in consultation with the State Agency Team and the HRCAP Advisory Committee will develop a financial plan for use of the existing funds and a strategy for acquiring additional funding.

Develop Phase 1 Implementation Plan

The Phase 1 Implementation Plan will be based on the budget available as determined by the Financial Plan and will include the following:

- Anticipated schedule of access for at least the first 6 months of operation.
- List of necessary infrastructure improvements
- List of actions to ensure equitable access, including communications and outreach plan
- Initial reservation system plan
- Emergency communications plan
- Plan for developing community partnerships to aide in access implementation

Obtain Permits and Conduct CEQA Review

The Managing Entity will need to obtain permits to carry out the program and may have to do additional CEQA review. This will include a Coastal Development permit. It is unlikely that other permits will be needed to initiate the program, but additional permits may be needed if expansion of the program includes improvements to the road or construction of trail access.

Install Basic Infrastructure

Lead: Managing Entity

A limited amount of basic infrastructure will need to be in place before public access is initiated to the Hollister Ranch coastline. At a minimum, this includes safety signage and temporary restrooms. Additional infrastructure may be needed for specific access components. That additional infrastructure can be installed over time as needed.