

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT  
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# Th5

**Prepared November 15, 2021 for November 18, 2021 Hearing**

**To:** Commissioners and Interested Persons

**From:** Linda Locklin, Public Access Program Manager

**Subject: Additional hearing materials for Th5  
Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program Workshop**

This package includes additional materials related to the above-referenced hearing item as follows:

Additional Organization correspondence received in the time since the staff report was distributed

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5  
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*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life.*

November 12, 2021

SB-101-46.36

California Coastal Commission  
725 Front Street, Suite 300  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**COMMENTS FOR THE DRAFT HOLLISTER RANCH COASTAL ACCESS PROGRAM DOCUMENT**

Dear Commissioners:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) thanks you for the opportunity to review the Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) Conceptual Program document and offers the following comments at this time.

**General Comments:**

Caltrans supports local development that is consistent with State planning priorities intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety. We accomplish this by working with local jurisdictions to achieve a shared vision of how the transportation system should and can accommodate interregional and local travel and development. Projects that support smart growth principles which include improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure (or other key Transportation Demand Strategies) are supported by Caltrans and are consistent with our mission, vision, and goals.

As a result of Senate Bill (SB) 743, effective July 2020 Caltrans replaced vehicle level of service (LOS) with vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the primary metric for identifying transportation impacts from local development. Additionally, the Caltrans Transportation Impact Study Guide (TISG) replaces the Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Impact Studies (Caltrans, 2002) and is for use with local land use projects. The focus now will be on how projects are expected to influence the overall amount of automobile use instead of traffic congestion as a significant impact.

Employing VMT as the metric of transportation impact Statewide will help to promote Green House Gas (GHG) emission reductions consistent with SB 375 and can be achieved through influencing on-the-ground development.

Implementation of this change will rely, in part, on local land use decisions to reduce GHG emissions associated with the transportation sector, both at the project level, and in long-

term plans (including general plans, climate action plans, specific plans, and transportation plans) and supporting Sustainable Community Strategies developed under SB 375. In addition to any site-specific access or safety concerns with the project, it is likely that the Caltrans correspondence will focus attention on meeting overall VMT reducing goals.

Caltrans encourages the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the project location. EV charging stations can help assist in SB 743's goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG's) emissions by providing a sustainable transportation option through electric vehicles. Many local and statewide programs offer grants and incentives for EV charging stations. For more information, please contact the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District.

**Specific Comments:**

Please refer to the attached Caltrans letter for the Gaviota Coast Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) dated August 29, 2016 which continues to apply.

Caltrans is interested in safe public access to Hollister Ranch and requests to receive notifications on this project. The HRCAP proposes intensification of the at-grade crossing for up to 500 people-a-day but does not address ingress and egress from Highway 101 and particularly left-turn movements. All public access to Hollister Ranch will originate from Highway 101 and potential impacts should be disclosed and mitigation addressed in the HRCAP documents.

Sufficient parking and shuttle staging should occur on Hollister Ranch as stated as an option in the draft document. We encourage the Coastal Commission to include complete street elements throughout the project to ensure the safety of all pedestrians and cyclists traveling from Highway 101 onto the Hollister Ranch.

We look forward to continued coordination on this project. If you have any questions, or need further clarification on items discussed above, please contact me at (805) 835-6555 or [Ingrid.mcroberts@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Ingrid.mcroberts@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

*Ingrid McRoberts*

Ingrid McRoberts  
Development Review Coordinator  
District 5, LD-IGR South Branch

Attachment

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

50 HIGUERA STREET  
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*Flex your power!  
Be energy efficient!*

August 29, 2016

Mr. David Lackie  
Santa Barbara County Planning Department  
123 Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

SCH# 2014011027  
05-SB-101-var

**COMMENTS ON THE GAVIOTA COAST PLAN DRAFT FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT REPORT**

Dear Mr. Lackie:

We would like to thank Santa Barbara County Planning staff for involving Caltrans throughout the development of the *Gaviota Coast Plan*. The plan has an important role in promoting the safety of travelers on US 101 and draws attention to the relationship between land use and transportation along the Gaviota Coast. US 101 through the Gaviota Coast serves as a major interregional corridor for bicycle and automobile travel and Caltrans appreciates that the plan recognizes the importance of making future decisions that promote long-term safety and operations of the route.

Specifically, Caltrans supports the discussion in the Transportation Planning Issues section that identifies the Departments' goal to reduce at-grade crossings and facilitate conversion of the route from Expressway to Freeway. This is identified as a strategy to support safety and operations of the facility in our 2014 *US 101 Transportation Concept Report*. The *Gaviota Coast Plan* Transportation Policy TEI-2: New At-Grade Crossings, identifies that private road entrances off of US 101 shall be limited. Caltrans supports this statement but would like to reinforce that no encroachment allowing new driveways or at-grade access will be permitted on US 101 through the Gaviota Coast.

Caltrans appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Final Draft Environmental Impact Report for the *Gaviota Coast Plan*. Additional detailed comments on the plan are attached. Please feel welcome to contact me at 805-549-3800 or [melissa.streder@dot.ca.gov](mailto:melissa.streder@dot.ca.gov) if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Melissa Streder  
Caltrans District 5  
Planning and Development Review



## Attachment

### Caltrans Detailed Comments

1. Chapter 7-1: “interchanges” and “intersections” cannot be used interchangeably. An interchange is grade separated while an intersection is not. Please make the following correction: “In this area, Highway 101 utilizes many at-grade crossings with no stop signs or traffic signals at the ~~interchanges~~ intersection; however, there are...”
2. Chapter 7-2: The Pacific Coast Bicycle Route on the Gaviota Coast does not have a Class I bicycle path. Please make the following correction: “there are no formal sidewalks present and few formalized bikeways ~~paths~~ with exception to the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route.”
3. Chapter 7-22 Good discussions of Caltrans plans for at-grade access issue. Perhaps reference, “Per Caltrans 2014 *US 101 Transportation Concept Report*”.
4. Action TEI-1-Please change reference of “CalTrans” to “Caltrans”
5. Policy TEI-7: Caltrans supports this policy. Discretionary projects should have conditions of approval in coordination with the County and Caltrans as part of the environmental review process. Further ministerial projects should also consider the transportation impacts associated with ingress and egress. Caltrans consultation should occur on both discretionary and ministerial projects.

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# Th5

### **HOLLISTER RANCH COASTAL ACCESS PROGRAM NOVEMBER 18, 2021 WORKSHOP**

### **ORGANIZATION CORRESPONDENCE**



**Via Electronic Mail**

Steve Padilla, Chair  
California Coastal Commission  
455 Market Street, Ste. 300  
San Francisco CA 94105  
Email: [Hollister@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:Hollister@coastal.ca.gov)

October 8, 2021

Re: Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP)  
Coastal Commission October 14 Virtual Workshop

Dear Chairman Padilla & Commissioners,

As Chair of The Hollister Ranch Owner's Association (HROA), I write on behalf of the Board of Directors. The HROA is a nonprofit organization made up of residents and property owners of the Hollister Ranch (HR), a 14,000-acre agricultural preserve and cattle ranch in Santa Barbara County, California. HROA works to ensure protection of the very significant cultural and agricultural resources and of a myriad of environmentally sensitive and endangered coastal natural resources along this 8.5-miles of coastline.

Having been a diligent stakeholder in the two-year process so far under AB 1680, HROA has reviewed the Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (Draft HRCAP), dated September 24, 2021. As an initial matter, HR generally supports several important points in the Draft HRCAP, including the observations that:

-- "The overwhelming sentiment is to balance public access along the Hollister Ranch coastline with protections against impacting the Ranch's resources or substantially diminishing the rugged, mostly undeveloped characteristics of the area." Draft HRCAP at p. 8.

-- **"agreement on the need to prevent damage to existing private properties, ranch operations, coastal experiences and the natural and cultural resources is a generally agreed upon priority."** (Emphasis Added). Draft HRCAP at p. 21

-- **"Stakeholders recognize that providing public access through private property with little existing public use infrastructure, an active rail line and a cattle operation requires careful planning...."** (Emphasis added) Draft HRCAP at p. 21.

-- "limited access...along the Hollister Ranch coastline over the past half century has preserved...coastal resources in a relatively undeveloped state" and that "human impacts from increased public access are a primary concern of most stakeholders..." Draft HRCAP at p. 20.

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Unfortunately, the plan offers these universally supported guiding principles but then proceeds to completely ignore them, proposing instead an approach that would *impede* efforts to protect Chumash cultural resources; *displace* threatened and endangered species that have safely called this coastal area their home for centuries; and potentially do *irreversible damage* to one of the few truly wild coastal areas left in southern and central California. Indeed, the HRCAP offers no analysis to support the plan and no path for assuring that analysis before seeking to implement that plan, an approach that flies in the face of how any state agency would approach a public project with such significant adverse impacts.

#### Balancing Access with Protection of Sensitive Coastal Resources

Biologists, geologists, archaeologists, and other scientists have studied HR's unique 8.5-mile stretch of coastline for many years, identifying an abundance of wildlife, including many species listed as endangered or threatened under state and federal law.<sup>1</sup> As the Draft HRCAP acknowledges and documents, protecting those resources is no small task.

Just as important are cultural resources: the beaches and estuaries west of Gaviota State Park contain numerous sites of spiritual significance to the Chumash.<sup>2</sup> Without state involvement, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (SYBCI) and the Hollister Ranch have established an enduring partnership to ensure Native American access to this special part of coastline and to protect and preserve known and unknown cultural resources. Within the AB 1680 public access working groups and in other communications, it is our understanding that the Chumash have requested that increased public access not be implemented until after appropriate archaeological surveys have been completed to identify and document sensitive cultural resources along the coastline.

For the past two years in the context of the AB 1680 process, we do not recall seeing any group or individual asking or advocating for 100 members of the public initially, and as many as 500 visitors per day later. We have no idea when and how these numbers became a goal under AB 1680. We also do not recall seeing those numbers suggested by any of the state agency participants until the June 2021 Draft HRCAP was released. And there was significant public push back on those numbers at the June 16, 2021, public hearing Zoom call arranged by the public agencies to discuss that draft.

To our knowledge there has been no analysis by any of the four state agencies (or anyone else) regarding the current or maximum carrying capacity of the HR coastline, much less any evaluation of the existing baseline or impacts related to an additional 100 to 500 people per day, as now suggested by the State Agency Team. If these numbers were simply cut and pasted from the 1981 HRCAP then it is worth recalling that they were not based on any scientific or baseline consideration that was done at that time. In fact, the only specific alternative advisory since the Coastal Commission's 1981 proposal for 100 to

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<sup>1</sup> Attached here as Exhibit A is that "Summary of Biological Study on the Coastal Portion of the Hollister Ranch" prepared by Channel Islands Restoration (CIR), dated September 24, 2020, a synopsis of CIR's much larger multi-year biologic assessment of HR entitled "Plants and Animals on the Coast of The Hollister Ranch, Santa Barbara County, California, dated February 2021. These and other biologic documents, including the Coastal Commission's own ESHA assessment by Coastal Commission Senior Ecologist Jonna D. Engel, Ph.D., entitled "ESHA Determination for the Gaviota Coast Coastal Zone dated April 24, 2018, have been provided to the State Agency Team and are known by them, but for some reason are either not included or acknowledged in the September 24, 2021, Draft HRCAP report, or referenced in Section 9 at p. 96 but not evaluated or otherwise measured against likely impacts from the HRCAP's development recommendations.

<sup>2</sup> Attached here as Exhibit B is that "Summary of Cultural Resources Study, Hollister Ranch, Santa Barbara County, California" prepared by Applied EarthWorks Inc., dated November 3, 2020.

500 additional people per day that we are aware of came from consultations between HR and SYBCI and focused on providing less impactful access opportunities to underserved communities and use of Native American docents.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, 100 to 500 additional visitors per day in the remote Pt. Conception area represents 10 to 20 times the existing daily visitors who have historically been found on the beaches adjacent to the Hollister Ranch. This historically low intensity of visitation has been, and is, a fundamental principle of good stewardship, and is directly responsible for the abundant levels of biodiversity and wildlife not seen in the rest of Southern California. If this area is to remain wild and undeveloped for future generations, carefully managed access and stewardship should not simply be abandoned and should continue to be a guiding principle. As Aldo Leopold famously said in *A Sand County Almanac*, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

Implementing such an audacious development plan as envisioned by the Draft HRCAP, without a detailed study of the adverse impacts resulting from such a dramatically increased human presence, primarily for recreational (not environmental) activity, raises many complex and unresolved legal, financial, physical and safety challenges associated with this rugged and unspoiled terrain.

#### Importance of Early Environmental Review

Hollister Ranch appreciates that the Draft HRCAP at least superficially acknowledges the challenges associated with its ambitious development plans. The Draft HRCAP, however, fails to recognize and follow the Coastal Commission’s obligations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in connection with its adoption of the HRCAP and how it intends to comply with those obligations. For example, in the Draft HRCAP section entitled “Design, CEQA Review, Permits and Install Additional Infrastructure”, the plan does not actually address CEQA or CEQA compliance. Draft HRCAP at p. 82. Rather, the Draft HRCAP appears to suggest that the Commission will develop access programs and infrastructure *first* and account for impacts and make adjustments *later, if ever*. Draft HRCAP at p. 10 & Sec. 7.0, pages 79-90.

Respectfully, the Commission cannot skip CEQA and defer important environmental review and public disclosure mandates to later stages by other agencies. The HRCAP is a “project” under CEQA, because it requires discretionary approval by the Commission and would cause a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. CEQA review must be completed as early as feasible in the planning process (CEQA Guidelines § 15004(b).) The “approval” triggering CEQA review is the earliest decision – in this case, the HRCAP – that commits the agencies to a definite course of action. (CEQA Guidelines § 15352(a).)

AB 1680 mandates that the agencies prepare the HRCAP and leaves substantial discretion to the agencies to determine the HRCAP’s final requirements. The plan that AB 1680 requires is not a mere feasibility or planning study for possible future actions. Rather, it will have a legally binding effect on later implementation activities. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15262.) Among other things, AB 1680 requires the HRCAP to include a specified list of public access options, provisions to protect and preserve sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources, an implementation strategy, and a program to implement the first phase of public access to the beach. Each of these would, at minimum, limit the

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<sup>3</sup> Attached here as Exhibit C is SYBCI and HR correspondence to the State Agency Team, dated June 2, 2021.



choice of future alternatives or mitigation measures and importantly the number of additional visitors that the coastline could absorb. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15004(b)(2).) Other public agencies have regularly complied with CEQA when preparing similar public access plans.

The HRCAP is a discretionary approval with legally binding effect that will constrain future alternatives and mitigation measures. It is insufficient to say that specific implementation activities will be subject to future CEQA review. The full scope of the HRCAP's environmental impacts also cannot be concealed by separately focusing on isolated parts, deferring to some future vaguely described "management entity(ies)" and overlooking the effect of the whole action in its entirety. Draft HRCAP at p. 9. Especially considering the delicately balanced, interrelated ecosystems at Hollister Ranch, the agencies cannot piecemeal CEQA review of the HRCAP's individual implementation actions, and instead must study the impacts of HRCAP as a whole.

#### Focus on Cooperative Efforts to Establish Access

Significantly, the Draft HRCAP mentions that "before any aspect of the HRCAP can be implemented, the necessary property rights for public access across private property including the inland beach areas must be negotiated with and acquired from the HROA and/or Hollister Ranch private property owners, and possibly from the Union Pacific Railroad." Draft HRCAP at p. 9.

Recognizing that the state's negotiations with the Hollister Ranch could be years-long and expensive, the Draft HRCAP report states in Section 7.1 the California State Lands Commission will "negotiate and acquire public access property rights." Draft HRCAP at p. 79. The apparent expressed intent by the State Agency Team to engage in condemnation litigation is something that HR believes is counterproductive, and we urge the State to avoid the expense, conflict and likely unproductive outcome that would result from such a combative approach.

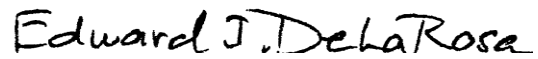
Instead, HR encourages the State to focus on the hopeful tone presented in other portions of the Draft HRCAP regarding the potential for cooperation in planning that has been offered by the Hollister Ranch: "the State Agency Team is working with the HROA to be able to provide interim public access to the Ranch, prior to acquisition of public access rights and completion of the preparation phase. This interim public access would be voluntarily granted by the HROA and is not a guaranteed part of the HRCAP." Draft HRCAP at p. 79.

While Hollister Ranch property owners would need to approve any expanded access plans, these programs could expand upon the Hollister Ranch's decades-long history of hosting public visitors. These existing programs include docent-led events for organizations such as the Tidepool School, the Lompoc Historical Society, the Audubon Society, Operation Surf, a nonprofit organization for military veterans, NatureTrack, MeWater Foundation and for numerous scientists from UCSB and other institutions. HR has a proven track record of providing both public access *and* protection of natural and cultural resources in a remote, rural location, has made clear for the past two years in both written submissions and in discussions with the State Agency Team implementing AB 1680 that we are willing to expand those programs.

Whatever the outcome, it is important to recognize how unique and special this part of California's coast is, and to ensure it is preserved and protected for future generations. As a visiting scientist to the Ranch, award-winning biologist Dr. Kenneth Nealson recently observed, "Hollister Ranch is one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the world. It's important, fragile, and irreplaceable" and "Hollister

Ranch should be a living laboratory where scientific research and education can flourish, because education is the path to conservation and preservation.” Anyone interested in the preservation of wild natural resources for future generations should be guided by Neilson’s wisdom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. De La Rosa". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Edward J De La Rosa  
The Hollister Ranch Owners’ Association



**Summary of Biological Study on the Coastal Portion of the Hollister Ranch**  
**September 24, 2020**  
**Elihu Gevirtz**  
**Senior Ecologist**

Channel Islands Restoration (CIR) has prepared a biological resources inventory documenting the vegetation, plants and wildlife species occurring within the coastal portion of Hollister Ranch between Cañada del Agua Caliente and Arroyo San Augustine, between the railroad tracks and the ocean (the Project Area). CIR's team of botanists and biologists consisting of myself, Steve Junak, Peter Gaede, and Vince Semonsen have been engaged in comprehensive field studies within the Project Area since October 2019 and our work is ongoing. CIR's inventory, when completed, will establish a comprehensive biological baseline of the plants and animals occurring within the Project Area that can inform coastal access programs, resource management and ecological restoration opportunities. This letter summarizes the results and general conclusions of the biological surveys that we conducted between October 2019 and August 2020.

Our field studies documented 210 botanical species in the Project Area, more than half of which are native species, including four special-status plant species: sticky sand verbena, cliff aster, Hoffmann's nightshade, and meadow barley. We mapped coastal scrub, coastal sage scrub, coastal bluff scrub, native and non-native grasslands, lagoons, estuaries, sandy beaches, and rocky intertidal zones. With respect to wildlife species, we documented 130 birds, 16 mammals, 32 intertidal animals, 3 amphibians, 7 reptiles, 5 fish and additional fish that were not identified

Importantly, we observed four Federally threatened or endangered species including tidewater goby, California red-legged frog, western snowy plover, and southern sea otter in the Project Area (Figures 1 - 13 and Table 1). Tidewater gobies are in the lagoons at Agua Caliente, Santa Anita, Agujas, and Bulito. Red-legged frogs are in the lagoons at Agua Caliente, Bulito, Panochas and Santa Anita, and in the Cuarta culvert under the railroad tracks. Snowy plovers occur on the beaches at Santa Anita (Little Drake's) and at Bulito. Southern sea otters are in the nearshore waters. A breeding pair of snowy plovers and an adult with chicks were observed at Little Drake's in the Spring of 2020. Steelhead surveys were not conducted; but we know, based on historical records, that steelhead may inhabit some of the lagoons and streams. Four California Species of Special Concern: southwestern pond turtle, two-striped garter snake, rufous-crowned sparrow, and signs of American badger were also observed (Figures 1 – 13 and Table 1).

The Project Area contains sandy beaches, rocky intertidal zones, sandy intertidal areas, wetlands, native purple needlegrass grasslands, giant coreopsis scrub, creeping ryegrass turf, coastal bluff

scrub, coastal scrub, coastal strand, sandy beaches and kelp beds (Figures 2 – 13). These habitats support a diverse suite of both common and rare species as well as ecosystem processes. Some of these habitats are considered Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas as discussed in Santa Barbara County's Gaviota Coast Plan (the coastal portion certified by the California Coastal Commission in November 2018) and associated documents including a letter from Coastal Commission staff to the Coastal Commission (Hudson, Carey, Christensen, and Kubran, April 24, 2018), and a memorandum by Coastal Commission senior ecologist, Dr. Jonna Engel, April 24, 2018 (Exhibit 7 to Coastal Commission letter of the same date). The California Coastal Act, Section 30107.5 provides the following definition: "Environmentally sensitive area means any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments."

Based on our studies to date, we find that the Project Area supports high species diversity, an abundant plant and animal community and ecosystem processes. We observed low numbers of people on the beaches and other parts of the Project Area compared to beaches in more populated areas such as Goleta, Santa Barbara, Montecito and Carpinteria. During our many survey days the most people that we encountered in the Project Area on a single day was approximately two to three dozen spread throughout several miles of beach. The low level of human disturbance and activity may contribute to the biodiversity and abundance of plants and animals and to breeding success of a number of these animals. It is also relevant to future analysis of public access alternatives.

Based on the results of our surveys, we conclude that the Project Area supports biological resources that are significant in the context of the region and in the context of the state. We urge protection of native species, habitats, and ecosystem processes during planning and implementation of coastal access. To protect the unique character of the Project Area, we recommend that continuing careful analysis of biological resources be undertaken, and that future coastal access, recreation and intensity of use include on-going mechanisms to manage and protect the diversity and abundance of native plants and animals.

## Attachments

Table 1            Special Status Species  
Figures 1 – 13   Maps of Biological Resources

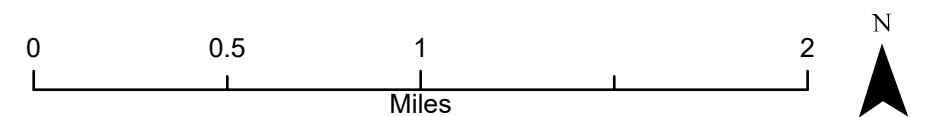
Special Status Species Observed in the Hollister Ranch Project Area in 2020							
Between Agua Caliente and San Augustine from the Railroad Tracks to the Near-Shore Ocean							
Species		Status			Locations Observed in 2020		Observation of Breeding in 2020
Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal	State	California Native Plant Society			
Sticky Sand Verbena	Abronia maritima	-	-	4.2	Limited geographic distribution in California; 20 to 80 percent of its occurrences are threatened.	Coastal Strand on elevated sandy beaches	
Cliff Aster	Malacothrix saxatilis var. saxatilis	-	-	4.2	Limited geographic distribution in California; 20 to 80 percent of its occurrences are threatened.	Coastal Bluffs and steep canyon walls	
Hoffmann's Nightshade	Solanum xanti var. hoffmannii	-	-	-	Regional endemic	Coastal Scrub	
Meadow Barley	Hordeum brachyantherum subsp. brachyantherum	-	-	-	Local interest	Wetland Swales in grassland in Drake's pasture and next to road at San Augustine	
Tidewater Goby	Eucyclogobius newberryi	Endangered	Species of Special Concern			Agua Caliente, Santa Anita, Aguas, and Bulito Lagoons	Evidence of Breeding
California Red-Legged Frog	Rana draytonii	Threatened	Species of Special Concern			Agua Caliente, Santa Anita, Bulito, and Panochas Lagoons; and Cuarta Culvert	
Southwestern Pond Turtle	Emys marmorata pallida	-	Species of Special Concern			Alegria and Agua Caliente Wetlands	Evidence of Breeding
Two-Striped Garter Snake	Thamnophis hammondi	-	Species of Special Concern			Santa Anita Grassland	
Western Snowy Plover	Charadrius nivosus nivosus	Threatened	Species of Special Concern			Santa Anita and Bulito Sandy Beaches	Evidence of Breeding at Santa Anita
Rufous-Crowned Sparrow	Aimophila ruficeps	-	Species of Special Concern			Steep, Dry Canyon Walls	
Southern Sea Otter	Enhydra lutris nereis	Threatened	Species of Special Concern			Off-Shore Kelp Beds near San Augustine and Bulito	





**Figure 1: Sensitive Species and Habitats**  
Plants and Animals on the Coast of the Hollister Ranch  
September 2020

- |                              |                            |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ★ American Badger            | ☆ Southern Sea Otter       | ⦿ Brandt's Cormorant Roost |
| ★ California Red-Legged Frog | ★ Tidewater Goby           | ● Native Grassland         |
| ★ Hoffmann's Nightshade      | ★ Two-Striped Garter Snake | ● Wetland                  |
| ★ Red Sand Verbena           | ★ Southwestern Pond Turtle | ■ Sandy Beach              |
| ★ Rufous-Crowned Sparrow     | ☆ Western Snowy Plover     | ■ Rocky Intertidal         |







**Figure 2: Habitat Areas**  
Cañada del Agua Caliente to Cañada de Alegria East Half  
September 2020

### Habitat Areas

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Coastal Bluff Scrub   | Road              |
| Coastal Scrub         | Ruderal           |
| Coastal Strand        | Sandy Beach       |
| Giant Coreopsis Scrub | Unvegetated Bluff |
| Rocky Intertidal      | Wetland           |

### Special Status Species

- California Red-Legged Frog
- Red Sand Verbena
- Rufous-Crowned Sparrow
- Tidewater Goby
- Southwestern Pond Turtle

### Breeding Animals

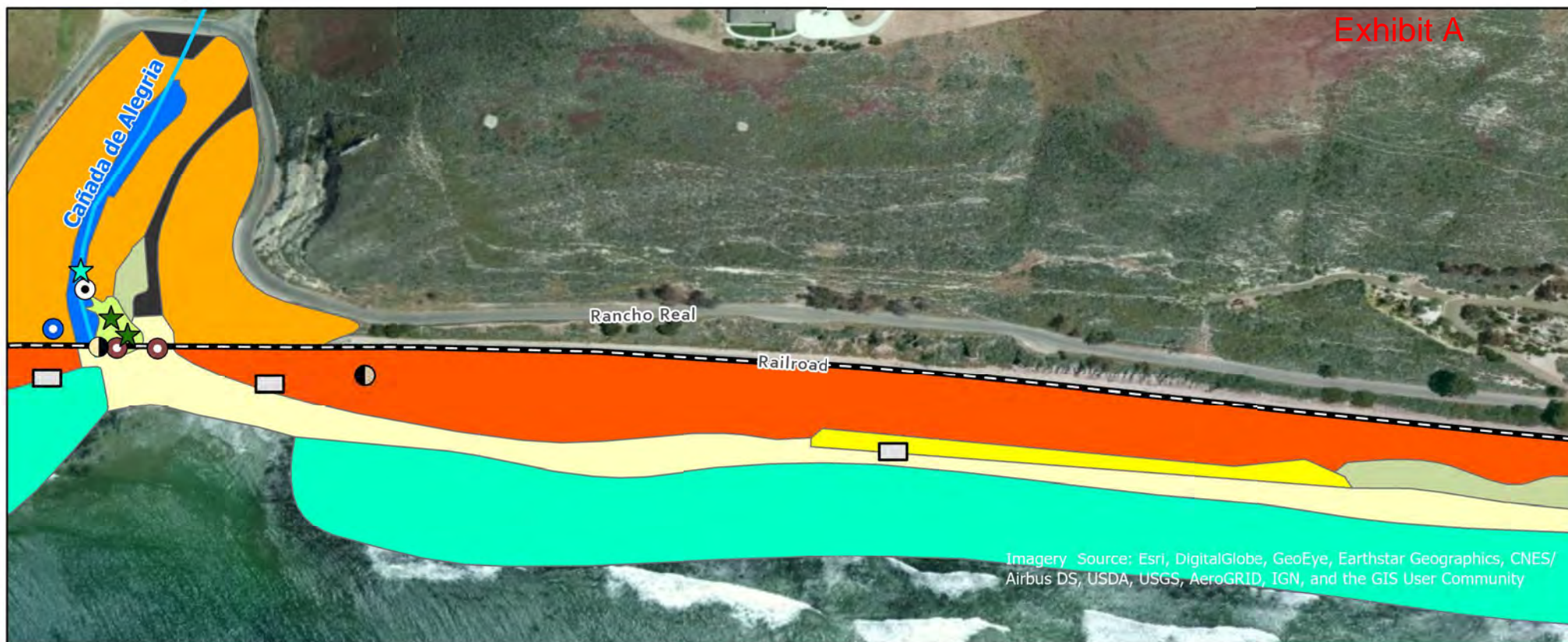
- Tidewater Goby

### Geographic Features

- Brandt's Cormorant Roost
- Sea wall
- Canyon
- Railroad







**Figure 3: Habitat Areas**  
Cañada del Agua Caliente to Cañada de Alegria West Half  
September 2020

### Habitat Areas

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Coastal Bluff Scrub   |  Road        |
|  Coastal Scrub         |  Ruderal     |
|  Coastal Strand        |  Sandy Beach |
|  Giant Coreopsis Scrub |  Wetland     |
|  Rocky Intertidal      |   |




### Special Status Species

-  Red Sand Verbena
-  Southwestern Pond Turtle

### Breeding Animals

-  Killdeer
-  Cliff Swallow
-  House Finch
-  White-Throated Swift
-  California Scrub-Jay

### Geographic Features

-  Sea wall
-  Canyon
-  Railroad

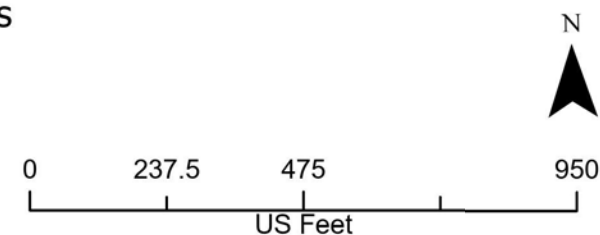






Figure 4: Habitat Areas  
Cañada de Alegria to Cañada de la Cuarta  
September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Coastal Bluff Scrub |  Ruderal           |
|  Coastal Scrub       |  Sandy Beach       |
|  Coastal Strand      |  Unvegetated Bluff |
|  Rocky Intertidal    |  Wetland           |
|  Road                |   |

#### Special Status Species

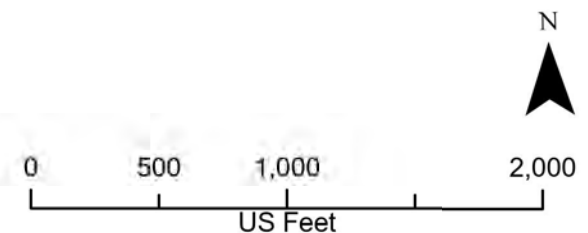
- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
|  | California Red-Legged Frog |
|  | Red Sand Verbena           |
|  | Southwestern Pond Turtle   |

#### Breeding Animals

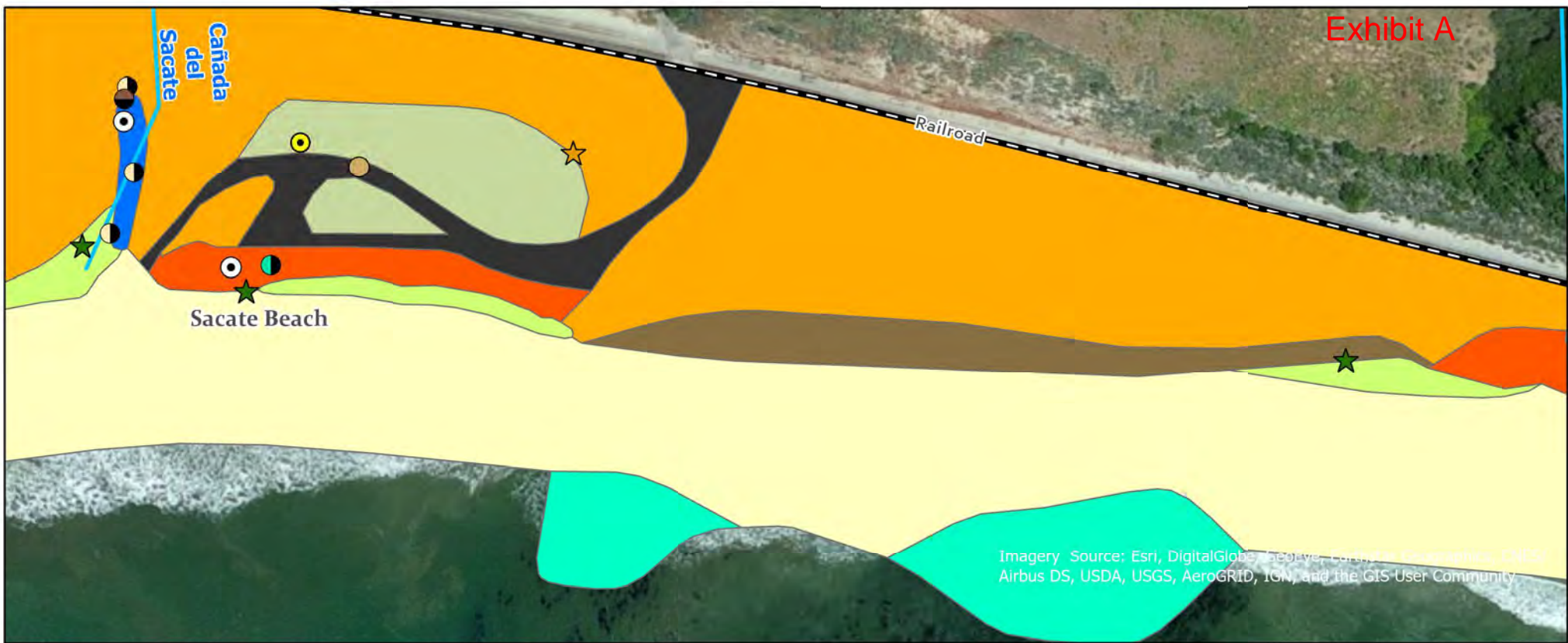
- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
|  | Killdeer             |
|  | Cliff Swallow        |
|  | House Finch          |
|  | White-Throated Swift |
|  | California Scrub-Jay |

#### Geographic Features

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
|  | Seep     |
|  | Sea wall |
|  | Canyon   |
|  | Railroad |







**Figure 5: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada de la Cuarta to Cañada del Sacate**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Coastal Bluff Scrub | Ruderal           |
| Coastal Scrub       | Sandy Beach       |
| Coastal Strand      | Unvegetated Bluff |
| Rocky Intertidal    | Wetland           |
| Road                |                   |

#### Special Status Species

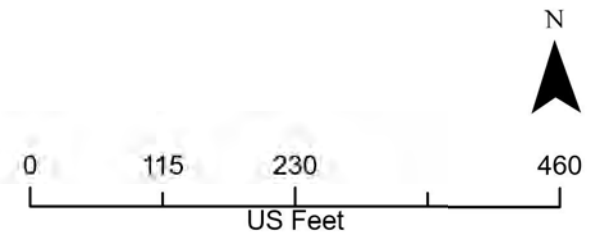
- Red Sand Verbena
- Rufous-Crowned Sparrow

#### Breeding Animals

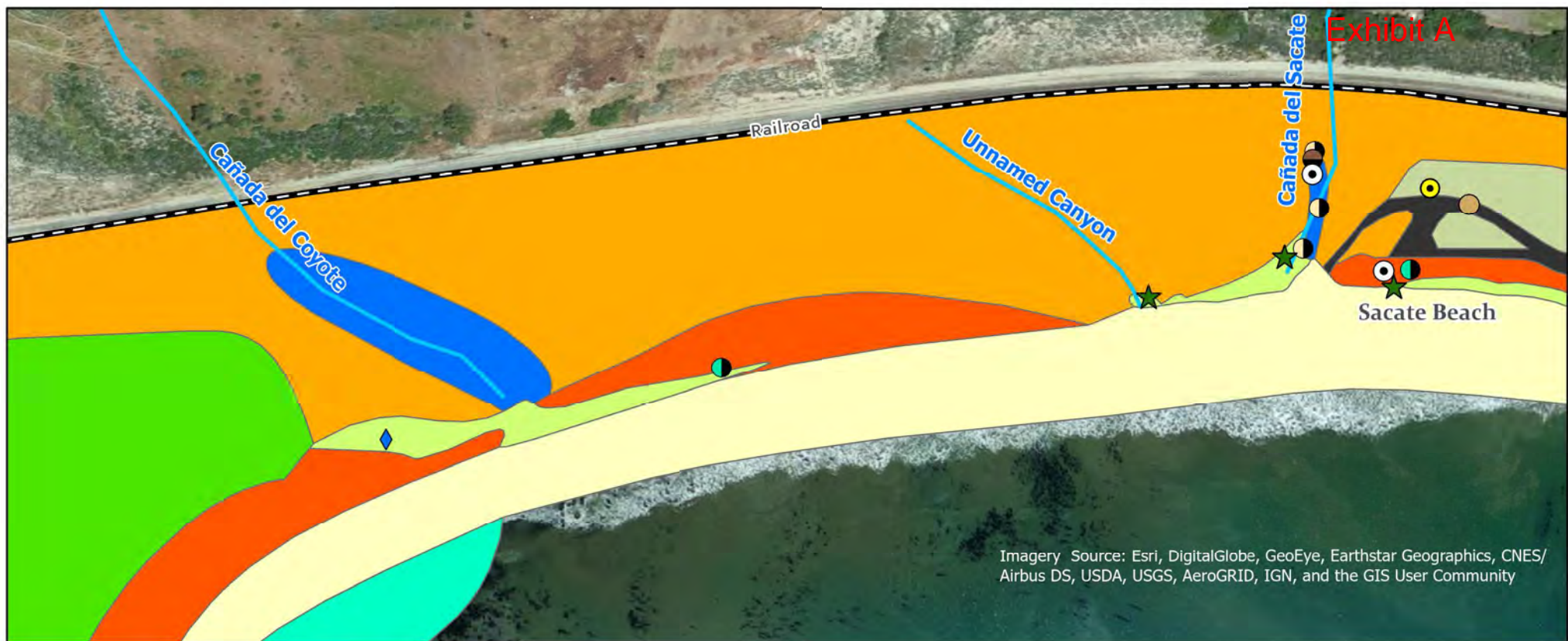
- California Quail
- Killdeer
- Barn Swallow
- Cliff Swallow
- Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
- Western Meadowlark

#### Geographic Features

- Canyon
- Railroad







**Figure 6: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada del Sacate to Cañada del Coyote**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Coastal Bluff Scrub  | Road        |
| Coastal Scrub        | Ruderal     |
| Coastal Strand       | Sandy Beach |
| Rocky Intertidal     | Wetland     |
| Non-Native Grassland |             |

#### Special Status

##### Species

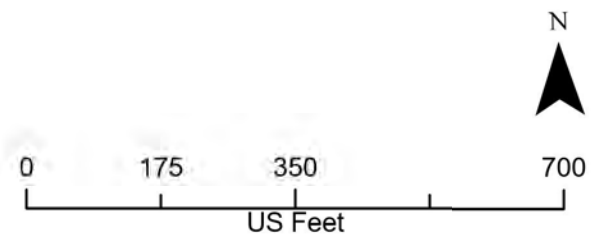
- Red Sand Verbena

##### Breeding Animals

- California Quail
- Killdeer
- Barn Swallow
- Cliff Swallow
- Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
- Western Meadowlark

#### Geographic Features

- Seep
- Canyon
- Railroad







**Figure 7: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada del Coyote to Cañada de Santa Anita**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

Coastal Bluff Scrub	Non-Native Grassland
Coastal Scrub	Pepper Tree
Coastal Scrub - Disturbed	Road
Coastal Strand	Ruderal
Creeping Ryegrass Turf	Sandy Beach
Eucalyptus Woodland	Snowy Plover Habitat
Rocky Intertidal	Unvegetated Bluff
Native Purple	Wetland
Needlegrass Grassland	

#### Special Status Species

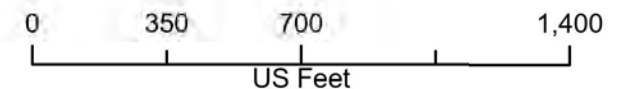
★	American Badger
★	California Red-Legged Frog
★	Hoffmann's Nightshade
★	Tidewater Goby
★	Two-Striped Garter Snake
★	Western Snowy Plover

#### Breeding Animals

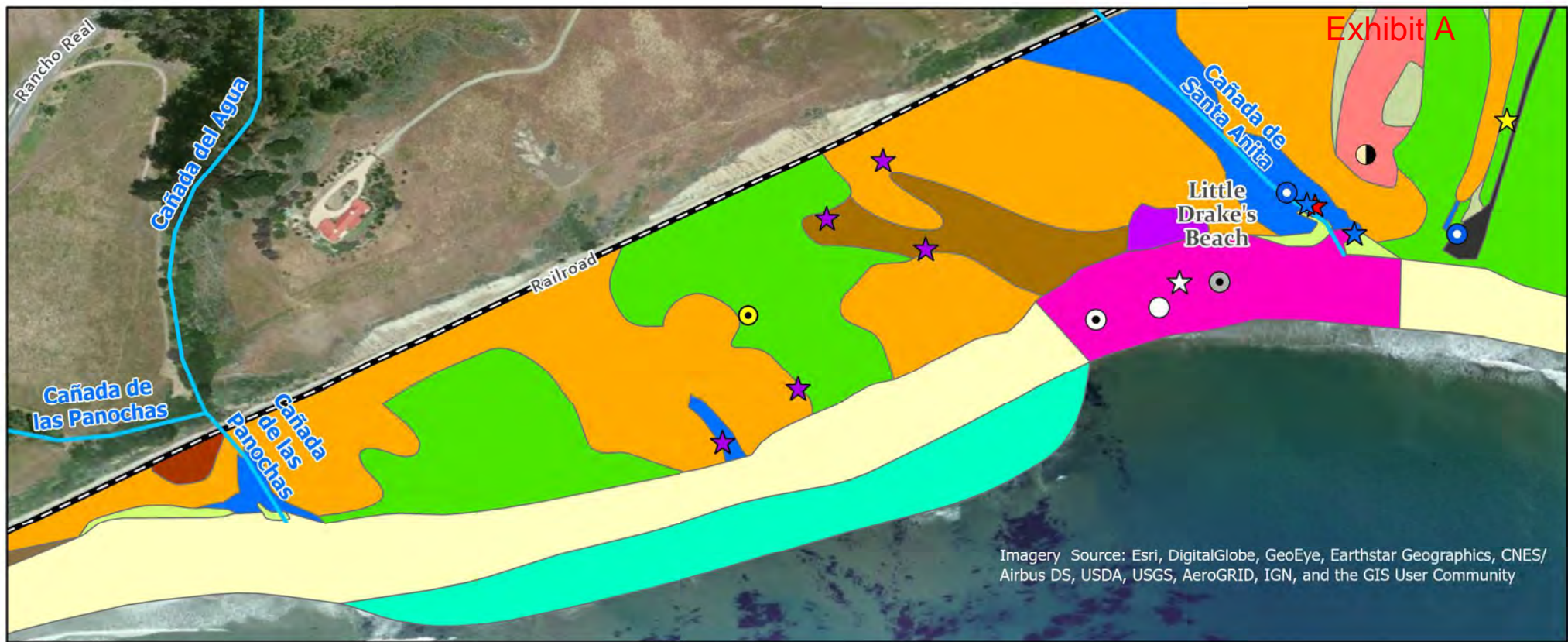
○	Western Snowy Plover
○	Killdeer
○	Cliff Swallow
○	Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
○	Horned Lark
○	California Scrub-Jay
○	American Kestrel
○	Great Horned Owl
○	California Gnatcatcher

#### Geographic Features

◆	Seep
—	Canyon
—	Railroad







**Figure 8: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada de Santa Anita to Cañada de las Panochas**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

Coastal Scrub	Pepper Tree
Coastal Scrub - Disturbed	Road
Coastal Strand	Ruderal
Creeping Ryegrass Turf	Sandy Beach
Eucalyptus Woodland	Snowy Plover Habitat
Rocky Intertidal	Unvegetated Bluff
Non-Native Grassland	Wetland

#### Special Status Species

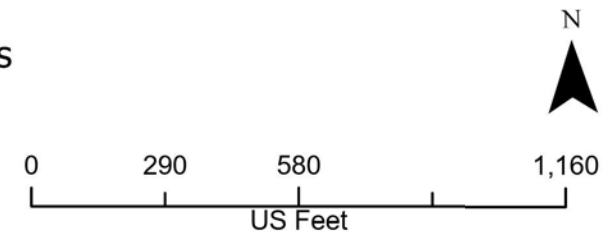
California Red-Legged Frog
Hoffmann's Nightshade
Tidewater Goby
Two-Striped Garter Snake
Western Snowy Plover

#### Breeding Animals

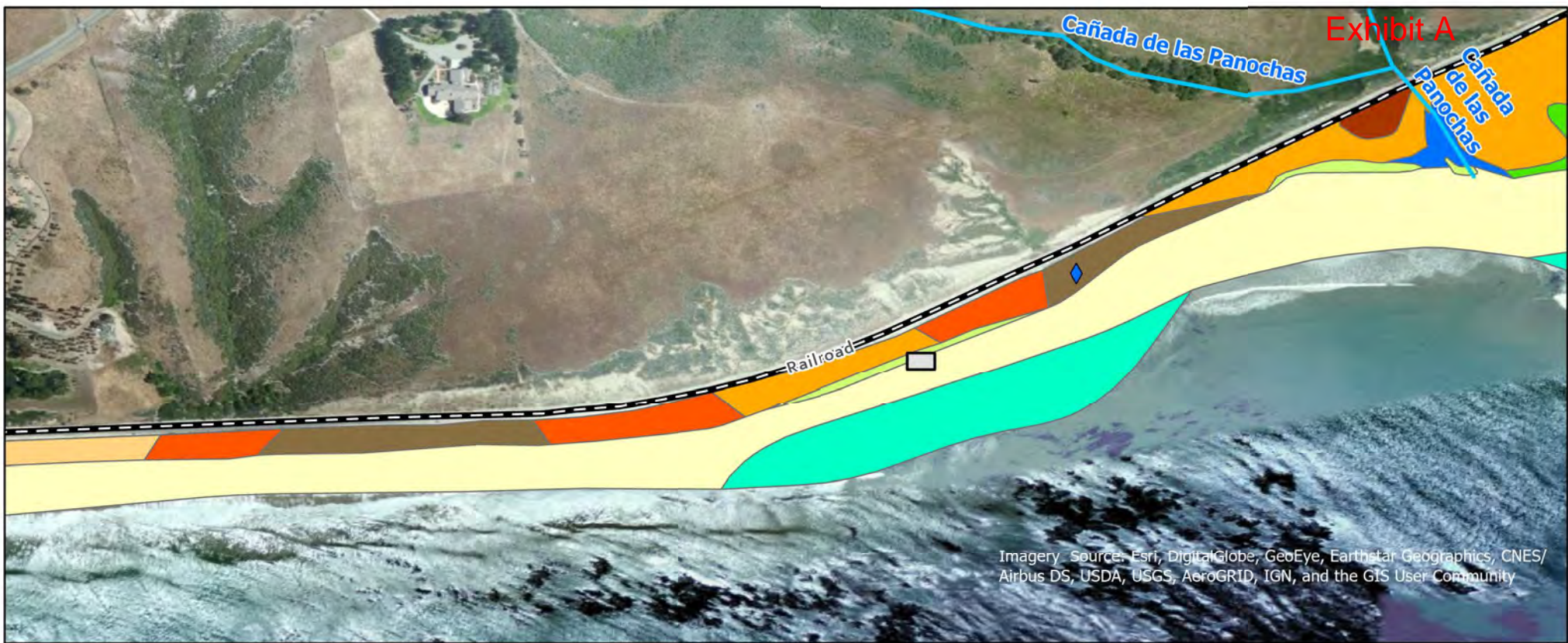
Western Snowy Plover
Killdeer
Cliff Swallow
Western Meadowlark
California Scrub-Jay
California Gnatcatcher

#### Geographic Features

Canyon
Railroad







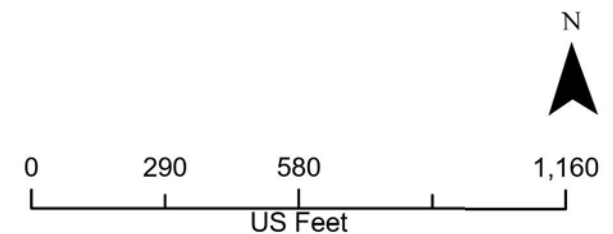
**Figure 9: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada de las Panochas to Arroyo el Bulito East Half**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

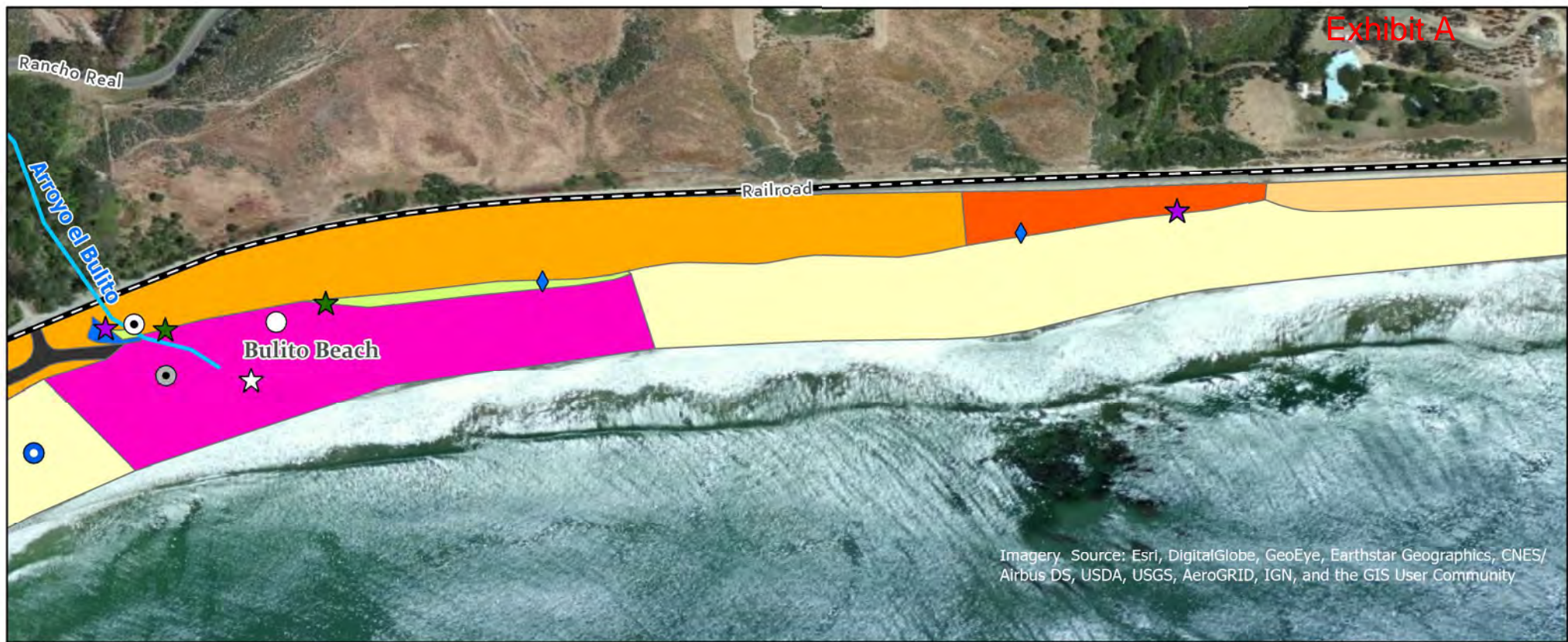
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Coastal Bluff Scrub	<span style="color: green;">■</span> Non-Native Grassland
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Coastal Scrub	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Pepper Tree
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Coastal Strand	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Sandy Beach
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Disturbed Bluff	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Unvegetated Bluff
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> Rocky Intertidal	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Wetland

#### Geographic Features

<span style="color: blue;">◆</span> Seep
<span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span> Sea wall
<span style="color: blue;">—</span> Canyon
<span style="border-bottom: 2px dashed black; display: inline-block; width: 20px;"></span> Railroad







Imagery Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



**Figure 10: Habitat Areas**  
Cañada de las Panochas to Arroyo el Bulito West Half  
September 2020

### Habitat Areas

- Coastal Bluff Scrub
- Coastal Scrub
- Coastal Strand
- Disturbed Bluff

- Road
- Sandy Beach
- Snowy Plover Habitat
- Wetland

### Special Status Species

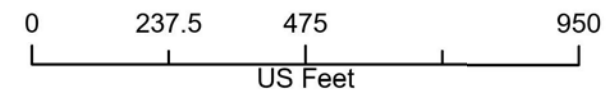
- Hoffmann's Nightshade
- Red Sand Verbena
- Western Snowy Plover

### Breeding Animals

- Western Snowy Plover
- Killdeer
- California Scrub-Jay
- California Grunion

### Geographic Features

- Seep
- Canyon
- Railroad







**Figure 11: Habitat Areas**  
**Arroyo el Bulito to Cañada de las Agujas**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

Coastal Scrub	Non-Native Grassland
Coastal Strand	Road
Eucalyptus Woodland	Sandy Beach
Rocky Intertidal	Snowy Plover Habitat
Lawn	Unvegetated Bluff
Native Purple Needlegrass Grassland	Wetland

#### Special Status Species

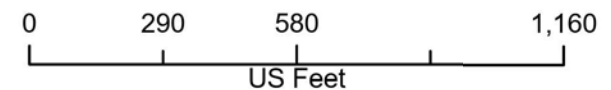
California Red-Legged Frog
Hoffmann's Nightshade
Red Sand Verbena
Tidewater Goby
Western Snowy Plover
Southern Sea Otter

#### Breeding Animals

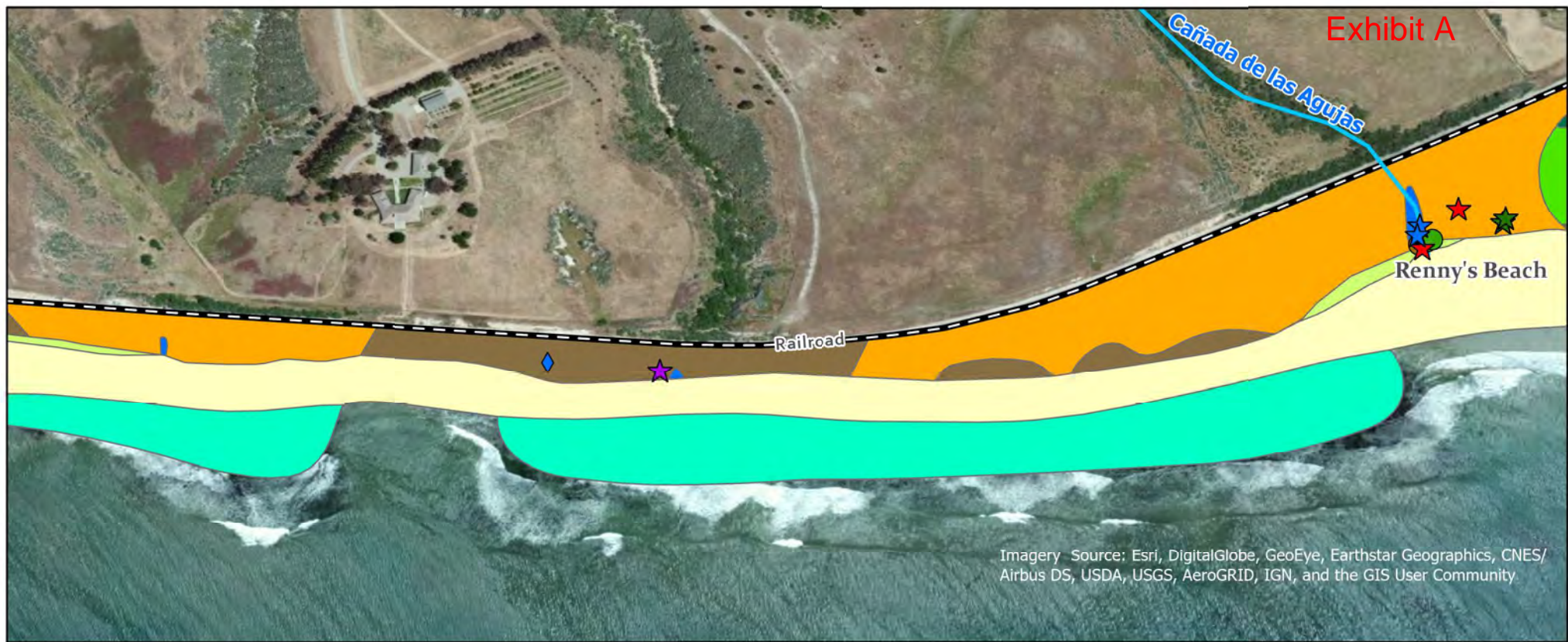
Western Snowy Plover
Killdeer
Great Blue Heron
Cliff Swallow
Western Meadowlark
California Scrub-Jay
California Toad
Baja California Treefrog
California Grunion

#### Geographic Features

Seep
Canyon
Railroad















**Figure 12: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada de las Agujas to Arroyo San Augustine, East Half**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Coastal Scrub                       |  Non-Native Grassland |
|  Coastal Strand                      |  Sandy Beach          |
|  Rocky Intertidal                    |  Unvegetated Bluff    |
|  Native Purple Needlegrass Grassland |  Wetland              |

#### Special Status Species

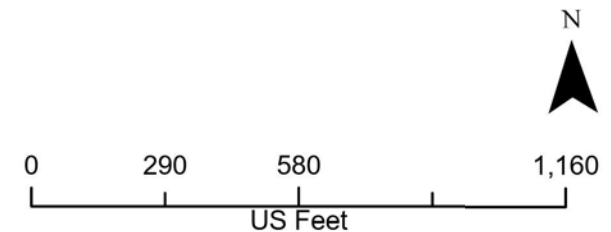
-  California Red-Legged Frog
-  Hoffmann's Nightshade
-  Red Sand Verbena
-  Tidewater Goby

#### Breeding Animals

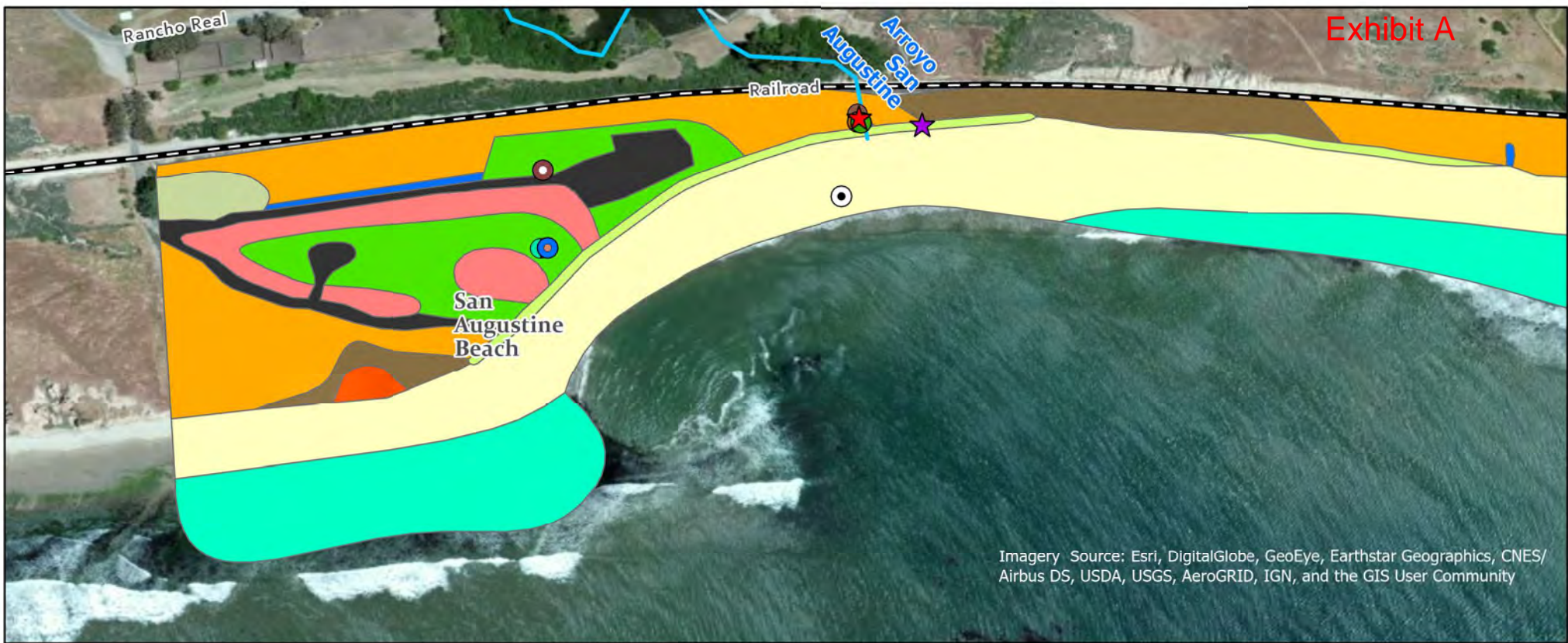
-  Killdeer
-  California Toad
-  Baja California Treefrog

#### Geographic Features

-  Seep
-  Canyon
-  Railroad







**Figure 13: Habitat Areas**  
**Cañada de las Agujas to Arroyo San Augustine, West Half**  
 September 2020

#### Habitat Areas

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Coastal Bluff Scrub  | Road              |
| Coastal Scrub        | Ruderal           |
| Coastal Strand       | Sandy Beach       |
| Eucalyptus Woodland  | Unvegetated Bluff |
| Rocky Intertidal     | Wetland           |
| Non-Native Grassland |                   |

#### Special Status Species

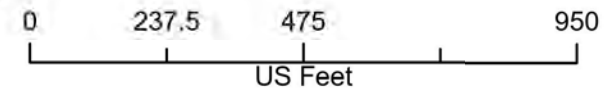
- California Red-Legged Frog
- Hoffmann's Nightshade

#### Breeding Animals

- Killdeer
- Barn Swallow
- Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
- White-Throated Swift
- Western Bluebird
- California Toad
- Baja California Treefrog

#### Geographic Features

- Canyon
- Railroad



3 November 2020

RE: Summary of Cultural Resources Study  
Hollister Ranch, Santa Barbara County, California


In 2019, Applied EarthWorks, Inc. (Æ) conducted background research to establish baseline cultural resources data for entire footprint of the 1981 *Adopted Coastal Access Program for the Hollister Ranch* (Program), including the common beach areas.

As part of this effort Æ completed a map and records review at the Central Coast Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System at the University of California Santa Barbara (CCIC-CHRIS), and reviewed and synthesized existing information about the cultural resources in the Program and common beach areas. Æ also identified the additional information that would be required to inventory, evaluate, and assess the Program's impacts to significant cultural resources under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) criteria. This information has been provided to state-recognized Native American tribal representatives within Santa Barbara County.

To minimize public knowledge of site locations that could lead to looting or other negative impacts to these resources, site descriptions are not disclosed in public documents. Information that Æ obtains through the CHRIS Inventory of the State Office of Historic Preservation may not be released to the public because it contains confidential information, pursuant to federal and state laws, including but not limited to the California Public Records Act, Government Code § 6250 et seq., and the Information Practices Act of 1977, Civil Code § 1798 et seq. We are, however, able to provide a general summary of our findings.

Acknowledging that some portions of the Program area have not been surveyed for cultural resources, our research documented 31 previously recorded cultural resources within or immediately adjacent to Program elements, primarily between the main road and the beach between Gaviota Beach State Park and the San Augustine drainage. This number includes resources that would clearly be directly affected by Program implementation, as well as those where sites are adjacent to Program elements but their boundaries have not been determined through testing. Twenty-three of these are prehistoric; one is historic; and seven are multicomponent with both prehistoric and historic constituents. Only five of the 31 summarized sites have been formally evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and/or California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) with California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurrence of eligibility status.

Our research indicates that the Program area contains a dense and diverse array of cultural resources representing at least 8,000 years of continuous human occupation. Many of these resources are likely eligible for inclusion in the CRHR and have significance to local Chumash tribes. While the resources have been impacted by past and existing development and recreational activities, this does not eliminate the possibility that they contain information important to our understanding of prehistory. Further, like



the Cojo-Jalama Ranch (now the Dangermond Preserve) and Vandenberg Air Force Base to the north, limited access to the Program area appears to have provided a measure of resource protection.

In conclusion, based on our research to date, we recommend that the planning and environmental review process for public access to the Hollister Ranch coastline carefully consider how such access would impact these non-renewable resources, with the goal of avoiding or minimizing impacts to significant cultural resources to the greatest extent feasible.

Sincerely,



Joyce L. Gerber, M.A., RPA #10836  
Senior Archaeologist  
Applied EarthWorks, Inc.





SANTA YNEZ CHUMASH  
TRIBAL ELDER'S COUNCIL

TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE TRIBAL ANCESTRY,  
TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

Via Electronic & U.S. Mail / June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

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**Re: Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP)**

After extensive collaboration and analysis of existing environmental baseline assessments, historical biologic reports and all known and available information related to cultural resources located within the Hollister Ranch Common Coastal Area (see attached map), the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians ("SYBCI") and Hollister Ranch ("HR") (collectively, "the Parties") advise the above referenced California State Agencies administering the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) of the following with respect to expanded public access to the Hollister Ranch coastal environment:

The HR Common Coastal Areas<sup>1</sup> contain over 30 recorded locations with highly significant cultural resources areas that are within or immediately adjacent to proposed infrastructure for public access and associated development which were authorized within the 1981 *Adopted Coastal Access Program for the Hollister Ranch*. <https://documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/hollister-ranch/1982%20Hollister%20Ranch%20Plan%20Revised%20Findings.pdf>

When approving the 1981 access plan for Hollister Ranch, no effort was ever made to ensure protection of cultural resources, despite likely severe and permanent damage of irreplaceable cultural resources.

Based on the significant nature of the cultural resources and sites at HR, their general ubiquity and sensitivity to both direct and indirect adverse impacts from increased human traffic, the Parties advise, with respect to the current HRCAP, that the State of California, adhere to the following parameters:

1. That prior to any new access programs the State of California honor those recommendations set forth in memoranda prepared by Applied Earthworks entitled *Summary of Cultural Resources Study Hollister Ranch, Santa Barbara County, California* dated November 3, 2020.
2. That any development or activity that may potentially facilitate or result in direct or indirect adverse environmental impacts to significant cultural resources be avoided. Such development may include, but is not limited to, construction of trails, expanded roadways, bike paths, parking lots or other intensive recreational oriented development.
3. That any new programs shall consist of group visits via shuttle, include not more than 12 individuals, occur no more than two times monthly, and visits shall *always* be led by docents or guides, who are knowledgeable about Chumash history, and who will be responsible for oversight and conduct of the group while on the Hollister Ranch.
4. That all programs implement environmental justice principles and prioritize visits for historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged communities in Santa Barbara County.

Edward J. De La Rosa

*Edward J. DeLaRosa*

Chair  
Hollister Ranch Owner's Association

Antonia Flores

*Antonia Flores*

Elders Council Chairwoman  
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

<sup>1</sup> The HR Common Coastal Areas are those privately owned lands and shoreline located seaward of Hollister Ranch Road, and includes rail lines and property owned by Union Pacific Railroad throughout the entire planning area.



# Gaviota Coastal Trail Alliance



October 8, 2021

California Coastal Commission  
45 Fremont Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) Workshop – Draft HRCAP Comments

Dear Chair Padilla and Honorable Coastal Commissioners,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Gaviota Coastal Trail Alliance (GCTA or Alliance), an ad-hoc alliance of organizations committed to effectuating safe and appropriate public coastal access including establishment of a continuous Coastal Trail with vertical access to Hollister Ranch beaches. GCTA supports the HRCAP and urges the Commission to address critical elements outlined below and proceed expeditiously toward its adoption and implementation. The Commission must ensure that the State Agencies develop such an implementation strategy to secure public access, not simply assume that access will somehow be secured. We also believe that opening public access to the coast at Hollister is an important piece of achieving the environmental justice goals of the state of the California and the agencies representing the state in this planning process.

The public's right to access the ocean is guaranteed by the California Constitution (Art. X, § 4), and the California Coastal Commission is charged by the Coastal Act to maximize public access to and along the coast (Public Resources Code § 30001.5). By actively excluding the public and resisting all efforts by the State to implement the 1982 Hollister Ranch Public Access Plan, Hollister Ranch Owner's Association (HROA) converted 8.5 miles of state tidelands and beaches into *de facto* private property. In proposing Assembly Bill 1680, then-Assemblymember Monique Limón recognized that the status quo is untenable and set forth a timeline for opening Hollister Ranch that is fast approaching.

The phased and adaptive management approaches articulated in the Draft HRCAP ensure public access will not damage natural or cultural resources, and will be compatible with agriculture and private property rights. The 100 people per day maximum proposed for the Pilot Phase, controlled through a permit system, will have minimal impacts. The loud objections of Hollister Ranch owners to even this limited and phased access approach<sup>1</sup> show that the Commission and other State Agencies must be prepared to advance the HRCAP without the Hollister Owners' cooperation. We urge the Commission not to get bogged down in the details of exactly how many people, where, and how – which pursuant to the HRCAP would be revised and refined based on various factors including management of impacts to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.independent.com/2021/09/28/hollister-ranch-beaches-opening-to-public-april-2022/>



sensitive resources. Rather we urge the Commission to focus on ensuring that the HRCAP includes all the necessary elements, articulates a robust implementation strategy and includes an aggressive timeline to ensure some level of public access will actually be realized no later than the statutory deadline.. Without specific and enforceable deadlines HROA will be tempted to revert to the time-tested strategy of delay and obfuscation while they enjoy nearly exclusive personal use of the state lands and beaches at Hollister Ranch.

Section 30610.81 (a) to the Public Resources Code (PRC), added by Assembly Bill 1680 (Limón), sets forth the minimum requirements for the HRCAP including an “implementation strategy”. (PRC § 30610.81 (a)(3)(B)). Articulating a clear implementation strategy is absolutely critical, because without it, the 2021 HRCAP will be just as ineffective as the 1982 Plan that the legislature sought to replace by approving AB 1680. Unfortunately the “Implementation Strategy” described in the Draft HRCAP fails to identify any meaningful details regarding how access rights – interim and permanent – will be asserted and any required rights acquired, which is a fundamental prerequisite to the State’s ability to implement *any* public access plan at Hollister Ranch. Moreover, the Implementation Strategy expressly relies on interim public access being “voluntarily granted” by the HROA, which is not a sound strategy and ignores the existing rights granted by the YMCA before the Hollister Ranch was subdivided. If the last 40 years have shown anything, it is that the Hollister owners and HROA will oppose public access at Hollister Ranch at all costs. Without a well thought out implementation strategy to exercise the public’s rights of access and a plan for any necessary property rights acquisition, in 40 years the 2021 Plan will still be just a plan on the shelf, like the 1982 plan was for the past 40 years.

The Draft HRCAP Executive Summary makes this strategic failure clear, simultaneously recognizing that landowner opposition thwarted implementation of the 1982 Plan, and that the 2021 Plan relies on the voluntary cooperation of these same landowners to implement interim access by 2022<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Draft HRCAP, p. 8 (emphasis added) (“Pursuant to the Coastal Act, individual Hollister Ranch property owners were granted coastal development permits starting in the late 1970’s to construct homes, stables, and other associated development on the condition that the HROA must participate in a program that would provide managed public access through the Ranch to the public beach areas. The Coastal Commission approved the required Public Access Program in 1982. **The Coastal Conservancy and the Coastal Commission attempted to implement the access program over the last several decades but have been unable to overcome landowner opposition and thus have not been able to acquire the necessary property rights.** The result today is that about half of the private Ranch parcels have been developed with homes, but the public still does not have land-based access to any of the public beach areas.”)

Draft HRCAP p. 9 (emphasis added) (“It is important to note that before any aspect of the HRCAP can be implemented, the necessary property rights for public access across private property including the inland beach areas must be negotiated with and acquired from the HROA and/or Hollister Ranch private property owners, and possibly from the Union Pacific Railroad. Negotiation of property access rights is a complex process which may require a significant amount of funding and could take years to complete. In order to comply with the AB 1680 deadline of opening initial access by April 2022, the State Agency Team is working with the HROA on the possibility of the HROA providing interim public access through the ranch to the beaches, prior to acquisition of public access rights. **This interim public access would need to be voluntarily granted by the HROA and is not a guaranteed part of the HRCAP.**”)

Further, while the Draft recognizes that implementation of the broader program could take years to complete due to the complex negotiation of public access rights, it does not identify any strategy or timeline for initiating this complex process, and includes no estimate of the costs of property rights acquisition (*see* Draft HRCAP p. 93). For interim access to be achieved by 2022, and for the HRCAP to successfully advance from the Preparation Phase to the Pilot Phase, and ultimately to the Program Implementation Phase, the State Agencies need a detailed strategy for overcoming HROA's opposition and obtaining the necessary access rights without HROA cooperation should that become necessary.

The HRCAP should be revised to include a detailed description of how the interim access plan will be developed and implemented, including: a) the process for exercising interim public access to reach state beaches at Hollister Ranch, b) the anticipated cost of interim access (monetary or other), c) the process and anticipated timeline for completing negotiations with the HROA, including how access will commence by the April 2022 legislative deadline, and d) an alternative plan or plans for securing interim access should HROA refuse to cooperate.

The HRCAP should also be revised to detail the implementation strategy for securing and exercising the necessary public access rights. Specifically, the HRCAP should include: i) the process and timeline for negotiation with HROA, ii) a range of cost estimates for acquiring access rights for each component including rights to use Rancho Real Road, beach access roads, and for each Coastal Trail option; iv) funding sources available to acquire access rights, and v) the process, triggers and timeline for State action to condemn any necessary access rights should HROA refuse to sell the necessary access rights.

Another important piece of information missing from the Draft HRCAP is the Offer to Dedicate (OTD) public access to and along Cuarta Canyon beach (near Sacate) that the Commission required as a condition of a YMCA facility approved in 1980. Under the public access condition in the YMCA's Coastal Development Permit (CDP), a total of 18,250 people per year could visit just one Hollister Ranch beach. The OTD included easements along Rancho Real Road and Cuarta Canyon Road, a beach access footpath, 3,800 feet of beach, and a bluff-top trail area. The State Coastal Conservancy accepted the OTD on April 5, 2013, and was promptly sued by the HROA and individual Hollister Ranch owners in an effort to invalidate the OTD. GCTA catalyzed this HRCAP process by intervening and successfully overturning a closed-door sweetheart settlement agreement that sought to abandon these public access rights in exchange for negligible benefits. The YMCA OTD litigation is currently pending in both the Court of Appeals and Santa Barbara Superior Court, and its outcome could affect – either positively or negatively – the State's need to and ability to secure a portion of the access rights necessary to implement the HRCAP. The proposed YMCA facility, and the recorded and accepted OTD, also colors expectations regarding the types and level of access that have always been anticipated and indeed required at Hollister Ranch and accordingly is necessary background information that should be included in the HRCAP.

The HRCAP should also clarify the level of use and permitting status of the various facilities and activities the HROA allows at Hollister Ranch beaches. Hollister Ranch's long history of evading Coastal Commission requirements – including but not limited to the long-standing (but now discontinued) HROA management of a permit system authorizing access for Hollister Ranch residents to

use HROA-managed roads to drive vehicles on state-owned, sensitive beaches - is directly relevant to understanding the level of impact that the proposed HRCAP is likely to have. The number of Hollister Ranch owners and guests currently using beach facilities would also help inform this analysis and should be included in the HRCAP. The absence of permits for HROA's beach structures and facilities is similarly a critical element, since HROA should be required to apply for permits and comply with reasonable public accommodation conditions, including compensating for the decades of harm HROA has caused to the sensitive beach and bluff environment and its precious natural and cultural resources.

Additionally, the HRCAP should further define the Managing Entity to ensure that whatever organization or other entity selected by the State Agency Team is not unduly controlled either by Hollister Ranch interests or motivated by profits, which could skew the management approach away from maximizing public access or toward unsustainable levels of public access respectively.

It is essential that the Final HRCAP continue to include provision for a continuous Coastal Trail – a longstanding goal of the State of California reflected in the statutory mission of the California Coastal Commission and State Coastal Conservancy. This was omitted from earlier drafts, yet is a core element of the California Coastal Act and a critical part of the public's access infrastructure. Related, we hope that the state planning process will be as creative and proactive as possible in securing trail access along existing road corridors as necessary. The California Coastal Trail is a network of many different kinds of access and trail conditions, and the opportunities at Hollister do not appear to be that different from many other locations in the state where we have thought about and achieved public access.

Finally, we believe that the state's aspirations for environmental justice along our coast can only be improved by securing access to and along the shoreline at Hollister. To the extent that this is provided for in the plan, we support this recognition. But it is time to open the Hollister shoreline for everyone in California, not just for those limited few who have access now. The Hollister shoreline is owned by and for the people of California, yet Hollister Ranch's opposition to public use has protected use of these State lands as an exclusive, private playground. The public is relying on the Commission to provide fair and equitable access to the Hollister shoreline as it is abundantly clear that Hollister Ranch will not do so on their own.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

LAW OFFICE OF MARC CHYTILO, APC

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ana Citrin', written over a horizontal line.

Ana Citrin

Marc Chytilo

For the Gaviota Coastal Trail Alliance



## SANTA BARBARA COUNTY Trails Council

Otis Calef  
President

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Curt Cragg

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Kerry Kellogg

George Amoon

October 08, 2021

California Coastal Commission  
45 Fremont Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) Workshop – Draft HRCAP Comments

Dear Chair Padilla and Honorable Coastal Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Trails Council (Trails Council) regarding the issues that should be addressed in the DRAFT Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program for an 8.5-mile long segment of the California shoreline. We want to thank all the members of the community and the State agencies who have worked through a pandemic to create the draft version of the coastal access program.

The Santa Barbara County Trails Council (Trails Council) is a broad-based trails advocacy, construction and maintenance organization consisting of hikers, trail runners, equestrians and mountain bikers and other trail users. The Trails Council was formed in 1967 to advocate for planning and construction of new trails and to help organize work parties to maintain existing trails. The Trails Council Board of Directors includes members with unique expertise in trail planning, design, construction and maintenance from agencies such as the United States Forest Service, County Planning and Development Department and City of Goleta, as well as those with extensive volunteer trail experience. We have over 50 years of trail planning, design, construction and maintenance experience and have recently assisted with construction of public trails in Carpinteria, Solvang, Orcutt and along the Gaviota Coast. Most recently, we completed the *California Coastal Trail, Northern Santa Barbara County Interim Alignment and Improvement Study*. Our interest lies in protecting public trail access, building and maintaining safe and sustainable trails, and promoting public engagement in land stewardship and trail use for all types of outdoor recreation. We provide trail-related planning, design, mapping, construction, and maintenance for city, county, state, and federal agencies to achieve these goals.

Trails Council supports the HRCAP and urges the Commission to address critical elements outlined below and proceed expeditiously toward its adoption and implementation. In our review of the Draft HRCAP we looked for weak links that put the project at risk of not being successful or happening at all.

### **California Coastal Trail**

The Final HRCAP must continue to include provisions for the continuous Coastal Trail – a longstanding goal of the State of California reflected in the statutory mission of the California Coastal Commission and State Coastal Conservancy. While glossed over in earlier drafts, we

acknowledge that trail planning and construction will be challenging. However, we appreciate that the draft plan now addresses the California Coastal Trail crossing the entire width of Hollister Ranch in a meaningful manner. It is a core element of the California Coastal Act, of statewide significance, and a critical part of the public's access infrastructure. As trail planning and building experts, we recognize the need for creative solutions to secure and implement trail access using a combination of existing road corridors and bluff-tops as necessary.

### **Maximum Daily Capacity | Protection of Sensitive Resources**

The Trails Council strongly supports a cap of *not less than 500 daily* visitations to Hollister Ranch. We understand that Hollister Ranch has raised concerns over potential effects on sensitive resources and the cattle grazing operation and that Commission staff has at least acknowledged such concerns. The Trails Council rejects the red herring that public access is somehow incompatible with protection of sensitive resources and cattle grazing operation and feels that there are both real world examples to directly refute this assertion as well as recent relevant actions by the County Board of Supervisors regarding grazing and recreation.

With regard to the compatibility of public access with sensitive species protection, we offer the following examples of sites that support extensive Environmentally Sensitive Habitats (ESH) and experience heavy public access or are planned for such access. These sites all receive light or no management, receive tens or even hundreds of thousands of visits annually and yet support extensive sensitive resources.

**More Mesa:** The majority of these 350 acres of ocean front open land is designated as ESH and currently supports more than 8 miles of trails, which receive heavy use by hikers, runners, beach goers, mountain bikers, off leash dog walkers and equestrians. Yet, even given the extensive trail network and heavy use, the site continues to support extensive wetland habitats, oak and riparian forest and is noted as sensitive wildlife habitat. More Mesa supports 2-4 white tailed kite nest that last year fledged 17 kite chicks, including from a nest in an oak tree immediately above a main access trail. The site also supports northern harriers, burrowing owl, short-eared owls, kestrels, red tail and red-shouldered hawks as well as coyotes and at least one family of bobcats.

**Ellwood Mesa:** This 250 + acre open space is largely designated as ESH and also supports 8+/- miles of trails and receives heavy use (perhaps more than 100,000 annual visits) by hikers, runners, beach goers, mountain bikers, off leash dog walkers and occasional equestrians. Yet, even given the extensive trail network and heavy use, the site continues to support probably the largest vernal pool-native grassland complex in the County, extensive wetland and riparian habitats and heavy use and nesting by raptors such as white tailed kites and a wide range of other raptors, as well as foraging by coyotes.

**Coal Oil Point Reserve/Sands Beach:** This beach and open space is largely designated as ESH, including a sensitive dune complex and perhaps the most successful western snowy plover breeding habitat in the County, and also supports trails and receives heavy use by tens of thousands of hikers, runners, surfers, beach goers, and dog walkers annually. These tens of thousands of visitors use or traverse the beach immediately adjacent to the plover habitat, yet the colony has expanded and thrived over the last two decades with only modest management

(e.g., ropes and signs, occasional docents). Yet, even given the heavy use, the site continues to support plovers and other sensitive resources.

There are many other examples of heavy public coastal access and successful protection of sensitive species protection. Given these and other examples, there is no justification for any serious limit on visitation to Hollister Ranch regarding sensitive species management and protection.

**Grazing:** Some have asserted or expressed concern that the coastal trail and public access are incompatible with grazing. We note that the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors addressed this issue as part of its review of the proposed Las Varas Ranch development and the Gaviota Coast Plan. The Board found that grazing and the coastal trail were compatible with only modest management measures such as signage and fencing. The Trails Council also commissioned a study (attached) by the former City of San Luis Obispo natural lands manager who provided real world examples of City and County open spaces that supported both cattle grazing and heavy public trail use.

Based on these County actions and this study, the Trails Council rejects the notion that cattle grazing present a barrier to public access on Hollister Ranch.

### **Implementation Strategy**

We appreciate the improvements to the Implementation Strategy section of the Draft HRCAP with expanded discussion of implementation steps and phasing, operations and management, general infrastructure, adaptive management, and the HRCAP Advisory Committee. Our concern is that the “Implementation Strategy” described in the Draft HRCAP fails to identify and plan for worst-case scenarios, such as the HROA not being willing to “voluntarily grant” public access for the interim public access program. A well-thought-out implementation strategy with contingency plans is needed. Hollister Ranch has spent decades using the court system in an attempt to hinder the public’s right to access. At a minimum, there needs to be an upfront action plan for any necessary property rights acquisition should the “voluntarily grant” of public access fail to materialize within a specific timeframe.

### **Managing Entity**

As stated in the Draft HRCAP, *“Implementation will largely be the responsibility of the Managing Entity with oversight from the Coastal Conservancy.”* However, the criteria or qualifications for being the Managing Entity are missing. Therefore, it is unclear what happens if organizations that meet the qualifications are not interested in managing the HRCAP. We are concerned that there will be inadequate interest in managing the HRCAP and unanticipated compromises in the choice of “Managing Entity” will eventually weaken or curtail the access program.

### **HRCAP Advisory Committee**

The HRCAP calls for a phased implementation and the creation of an HRCAP Advisory Committee, which would provide input on the program assessment and adaptive management decisions. We recommend that the formation of the committee go beyond selection by the

Coastal Conservancy and the Managing Entity. It is a common practice in Santa Barbara County for the five members of the County Board of Supervisors to appoint two people from their district to advisory committees so the whole county is represented. This will help insure that community participants with a diversity of backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives help advise program assessment and adaptive management changes.

In closing, we want to express how much we appreciate the opportunity to be part of the HRCAP workgroup and provide feedback on the immensely improved Draft HRCAP that needs more work to avoid unintended consequences that often plague such inspiring initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Wilkinson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mark Wilkinson  
Executive Director  
mwilkinson@sbtrails.org

# Trails and Grazing

Research and outreach performed by the Santa Barbara County Trails Council indicates that grazing is compatible with appropriate public access and trails. Numerous organizations and land management groups throughout California currently have ongoing public access through grazing lands were contacted and the information gathered is included in this document.



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
**Trails Council**



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# Las Varas Ranch

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Analysis of Issues  
Related to Livestock  
Grazing Operation  
and Trail Use

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Neil A Havlik, PhD.

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March 24, 2014

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*Neil A. Havlik, PhD.*

Planning Commission  
Santa Barbara County  
123 E. Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA. 93101

672 Serrano Drive #11  
San Luis Obispo, CA. 93405  
neilhavlik@aol.com  
805-801-3416

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Dear Commissioners:

My name is Neil Havlik. I have been asked by the Santa Barbara Trails Council to comment on the proposed subdivision project at Las Varas Ranch, west of Goleta, California, particularly in relation to the continued livestock operation, trail routing across the property, and the compatibility of those two programs.

### **Personal Qualifications**

I am a long-time and well-known natural resources manager, having been involved in this profession in California for nearly forty years. I graduated with a degree in biology from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California (College at that time) in 1968, earned a Master's Degree in Botany from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1971, and earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Wildland Resource Science from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1984.

In my professional career I worked for a number of public and nonprofit organizations as a planner, resource manager, natural history educator, and researcher. In most of these positions I was involved in many aspects of land and resource management, particularly involving the use of livestock grazing as a management tool, and integrating livestock uses with public use of those same lands. This generally included public use of hiking, riding, and bicycling trails. Specifically, the organizations for which I worked were:

- East Bay Regional Park District, where I worked in 1972 to 1978 and again from 1981 to 1987. At the Park District I rose from the position of park worker to resource analyst to range and property management specialist. In the latter position I was responsible for oversight of all agricultural operations within the 75,000 acres of the Park District's 40 properties at the time. There were approximately 25 different livestock grazing leases covering about 40,000 of those acres, virtually all of which were open to non-motorized public use (riding and hiking) on unfenced trails, which brought livestock and trail users in frequent close contact. I served as the liaison between park management and the various livestock and other agricultural operators. This meant being involved in many aspects of those operations, particularly in regard to their effect on public use and vice-versa.

- Solano Land Trust, where for nine years (1987-1996) I was the organization's executive director. During my tenure, the trust acquired over 5,000 acres of rangelands in four major properties which were eventually opened to the public for hiking, nature study, and other educational purposes. Like the lands of the Park District mentioned above, these rich grasslands continued to be used for livestock grazing operations as well as the public trail use (each site had one livestock grazing lessee) and as executive director I once again served as the liaison between the trust's Board of Directors, the licensees, and the public.
- City of San Luis Obispo, where I worked as the City's Natural Resources Manager for sixteen and a half years (1996-2012), until my retirement in July 2012. My primary duties at the City included creation of a greenbelt around the City, which was a high priority for the community and for the City Council, and establishing resource management programs for the lands so acquired. During my tenure the City acquired over 3,500 acres of land in fee title and another 3,500 in conservation easements, making an excellent beginning to the goal of a complete greenbelt around the City. At the time of my retirement, the City operated ten open space areas; open to the public, and ranging in size from about 30 acres to over 1,000 acres. Six of these sites had livestock grazing operations on them which were continued, with certain changes made to accommodate resource protection needs such as excluding livestock from springs and streams, or to balance the agricultural operations with newly introduced public use. However, once again, trail use was considered compatible with continued livestock grazing, and the grazing areas of these properties were again crossed by numerous unfenced riding and hiking trails. In my role as Natural Resource Manager I was responsible for development of management plans for these properties, as well as overseeing the implementation of those plans. This included determining the livestock grazing regimes there, and again serving as the liaison between the City, the livestock operators, and the public.

In each of these positions I have been called upon to judge the proper balancing of competing uses for the lands involved. Some had seasonal livestock grazing operations, others were year-round; some were stocker operations with only young cattle, others were cow-calf operations with a mix of adult and very young animals. This variety of operations in differing settings has given me valuable experience in working with those operations, where each livestock operator has his or her own management perspective. In addition, many of the lands had rare or endangered species in them, which called for special management or protective measures. Virtually all of the lands, however, were open to some level of public use on many miles of hiking and riding trails. These trails were multiple use, and generally unfenced, allowing livestock to intermix with trail users, *often in close proximity.*

## Addressing Problems and Use Conflicts

In my many years of experience addressing potential issues between hikers or riders and livestock, I generally found them to be minor and actually uncommon. The most frequent complaint from the livestock operators was that the public would sometimes leave gates between pastures open, so that livestock could move out of the pastures where they had been placed. This required the operator to round up the livestock or drive them back into the proper pasture, which added to management costs and time requirements. (In fact, gates being left open when they should be closed or closed when they should be open are historically the greatest complaint by cattlemen, and this can occur where public roads cross pasture boundaries). Other complaints involved people living near the parks allowing their dogs to roam the countryside, with the dogs occasionally harassing and sometime even injuring or killing livestock, especially calves. However, it should be noted that this complaint is quite distinct from people walking their dogs in the parklands and allowing them to chase livestock. The latter was also a complaint by operators, but was considered much less serious than the former.

Complaints from the public generally involved people complaining about stepping in manure while hiking or bicycle riding, and the generic complaint that livestock were incompatible with a park setting. However, in all my time in these positions I recall only one incident in which a citizen actually claimed injury, by having been “buted” by a mother cow when the citizen inadvertently got between the cow and her calf while hiking. The person was frightened but not seriously injured, and the matter was handled by the operator’s insurance carrier. There was occasional property damage from cattle getting out of the fenced areas; however, this usually involved damage to gardens or crops. Here again claims were relatively minor and were routinely handled by insurers. I recall no incidents in which a livestock operator made a claim against a park visitor.

In summary, during my almost 40 years as a public land manager charged with balancing public use with livestock operations, I found that people typically showed common sense and proper “range etiquette”, and there were generally no problems. I think that the problems were more vocalized in the urban East Bay than in the more rural Solano County or San Luis Obispo areas, where agriculture is close at hand and is second nature to many people’s experiences. In my experience, livestock operators adapted well to public use within the leaseholds and managed their operations in balance with recreational uses. I can recall only one livestock operator who relinquished his leasehold when the property was planned to be opened to the public, but the property was quickly leased again without difficulty.

## Applicability to Las Varas Ranch

I have reviewed the Agricultural section of the Las Varas Ranch EIR, as well as the “Las Varas Ranch Trails Analysis” by range consultant Dr. Orrin Sage. Dr. Sage stated that the cow-calf operation at Las Varas Ranch utilizes several pastures to separate heifers (young

cows that have not yet had a calf) from their mothers (the heifer weaning areas), and to keep them separate from other cattle during their pregnancies and time of giving birth (the heifer calving areas). Dr. Sage stated that these pastures were selected for ease of access by the livestock operator for better safety from predators such as coyotes or mountain lions, and for protecting the general health of the animals during these times.

This particular grazing situation, involving the heifers and later they and their newborn calves, appears to be the key issue supporting Dr. Sage's findings of a significant impact to the grazing operation, and appears to be the driving force for his recommendations regarding the near-shore Coastal Trail location and for extended periods of trail closure. However, based upon my own long experience and review of the maps and aerial photos, I believe it would be a simple matter to develop screening to shield the cattle from trail users and vice-versa, thereby obviating the entire issue.

My recommended solution for this issue would involve:

- Fencing off a strip of land thirty to forty feet wide along the southerly edge of the heifer weaning and heifer calving pastures for the trail and creation of a vegetative buffer to screen trail users from the cattle. Fencing should be standard "turkey wire" or other durable non-passable fencing that would also prevent intermixing of dogs and livestock.
- Vegetating the fenced trail corridor with a mix of plants of the locally native coastal sage scrub community would create an effective screen between these pastures and the Coastal Trail within just a few years.

Based on my review of the site, the gentle topography and relatively good soils along the bluff top favor this possibility. As many as a dozen species could be utilized for this effort. These species can establish naturally when coastal areas are released from grazing pressure or other grassland maintenance techniques, and this tendency could be speeded up by planting and irrigation for two to three years to ease their establishment. It is estimated that a fenced strip of land thirty to forty feet wide and occupying an area of less than two or three acres would be needed to accomplish this effect along the southerly or seaward edge of the heifer weaning and heifer calving pastures. This would not seriously affect the functioning of these pastures as they are not of sufficient size to support the livestock within them without supplemental feed anyway, and they are already subject to such feeding and other animal husbandry techniques for the health and predator safety reasons stated above. This of course involves the regular presence of humans in and among these animals.

Westerly of these pastures the trail is proposed to cross under the railroad tracks and be in an area of use by older cows which are more used to people and not so likely to be affected by their nearby presence.

I would conclude by stating that making what are essentially permanent land use decisions such as the location of the California Coastal Trail based upon the perceived or anticipated behavior of livestock is not the soundest basis for such decision-making. The project EIR notes that changes to the nature of the grazing operation, or even its elimination by the new owners, as a possibility. For such high-value estate properties, cattle could be replaced by horses, which are much more tolerant of both people and dogs, and they might in fact be pets themselves. Grazing use itself might be replaced by new orchards or vineyards. These changes could all be abrupt, and have nothing to do with the existence or location of the trail.

It appears to this reviewer that the potential conflicts between the livestock grazing operation and trail use are overstated, and that obvious, simple and effective opportunities exist to mitigate the potential impacts of trail establishment and use on that operation. My many years of experience with the different types of grazing operations on land with public trail uses, including those involving young cattle and calves, indicates that problems are not common, can be anticipated, and can be obviated or completely avoided by simple and effective management techniques.

Thank you for considering this input.

Sincerely,



Neil Havlik, PhD.  
Natural Resources Manager (retired)  
City of San Luis Obispo, CA.

cc: The Hon. Doreen Farr

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6/18/14



Santa Barbara County Trails Council  
P O Box 22352  
Santa Barbara, CA 93121  
[www.sbtrails.org](http://www.sbtrails.org)

Re: Compatibility of Cattle Grazing and Recreational Trails

Dear Planners:

My name is Doug Carscaden. I am the supervising ranger for the City of San Luis Obispo and have been in this position for the last 10 years. Our agency manages approximately ~1,500 acres of grazing land with 9 different cattle operations/leases. Our grazing land typically supports a couple hundred head max and consists of cow/calf and stocker operations along with horses/colts. Our agency's lands are used for both grazing and recreational trails and our pastures support ~18 miles of public trails. These trails are multiple-use (Hiking and Biking) and cross our land with trail users passing in close proximity to cattle and horses. Grazing areas have perimeter and pasture fencing with active trail users in the same pastures as the livestock. We have even developed mini cattle guards to facilitate recreation but keep the livestock where desired at pasture crossings and illuminate the need for gates. Picture attached.

The experience of our organization has over the last 10 years, on the whole, been positive because recreational trails and cattle grazing have proven to be compatible. We receive few complaints from trail-users about our grazing operation, with an average 5 annually, typically based on general interest, resource damage or concerns for the health of the cattle and horses. Problems caused to our lessees by trail-users typically include Dogs off leash and occasional gates being left open. We have never had a lessee complain about cattle losing weight or experienced any significant conflicts or negative impacts on grazing operations.

We employ a couple trail management strategies to educate the public and to ensure compatible use. Signs, mini cattle guards, rotation of grazing between pastures, and rangers in the field to answer questions if needed.

Sincerely yours,

Doug Carscaden  
Ranger Service Supervisor  
City of San Luis Obispo





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6/12/14

Santa Barbara County Trails Council  
P O Box 22352  
Santa Barbara, CA 93121  
[www.sbtrails.org](http://www.sbtrails.org)

Re: Santa Barbara County Trails Council--Public Trails/Grazing

Dear Mr. Otis Calef,

Point Reyes National Seashore was established in 1962 by President John F. Kennedy "In order to save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped." This public land was purchased in fee out of private land and then leased back to the ranchers of dairy and beef operations, who are essentially still here today.

Today, over 2.5 million visitors come to Point Reyes National Seashore annually and the dairy and beef operations are still in production. Of the approximately 150 miles of hiking trails, only a couple go through grazed lands. Trails such as Bull Point and Bolinas Ridge can have grazing and hiking taking place simultaneously and we have never had any interactions that could have caused disruption to the beef operations at those locations.

John A. Dell'Osso  
Chief of Interpretation and Resource Education  
Point Reyes National Seashore  
Point Reyes Station, CA 94956  
415-464-5135  
[john\\_a\\_dell'osso@nps.gov](mailto:john_a_dell'osso@nps.gov)

Commemorating 50 years of Point Reyes National Seashore

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Lassen  
National  
Forest

Eagle Lake Ranger District  
477-050 Eagle Lake Road  
Susanville, CA 96130  
(530) 257-4188 Voice  
(530) 252-5803 Fax

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File Code: 2200/2300

Date: June 27, 2014

Santa Barbara County Trails Council  
P O Box 22352  
Santa Barbara, CA 93121  
[www.sbtrails.org](http://www.sbtrails.org)

Re: Compatibility of Cattle Grazing and Recreational Trails

Dear Planners:

My name is Kirsten Pasero. I am a Rangeland Management Specialist for the Eagle Lake Ranger District on the Lassen National Forest in Susanville, California. I also oversee the recreation program for the Eagle Lake Ranger District. I have 25 years of experience with land management agencies, both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. I have worked in locations with a variety of recreational trails including wilderness, non-wilderness, equestrian and Off-Highway-Vehicle (OHV) trails that were within permitted grazing areas. The Lassen National Forest manages approximately 410,000 acres of suitable grazing land with 18 Term Grazing Permits that authorize grazing on one or more of the 50 active grazing allotments. Each permit varies in the number of livestock authorized based on the carrying capacity of the allotment area. Allotments range in size from 8,000 acres to 150,000 acres in size and may be grazed by 50 to nearly 1,000 livestock (cow/calf pairs) for 3-4 months annually. There are nearly 500 miles of developed trails on the Lassen National Forest, consisting of 30 miles of National Recreation Trails, 125 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, and 325 miles of other trails. These trails are multiple use for walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian use. Most are cross-country trails and traverse grazing areas that are not separated from trail-users, except for few of the recreation trails in campground areas where livestock are not permitted.

The experience of the Lassen National Forest has on the whole, been positive because recreational trails and cattle grazing have proven to be compatible. We receive few complaints from trail-users about our grazing operation, with an average 3-4 annually, typically based on hikers/bikers not knowing how to act around livestock, fear of livestock, or harassing livestock when encountered. Problems caused to our permittees by trail-users typically include failure to leave gates as they are found (open/closed). We have never had a permittee complain about cattle losing weight or experienced any significant conflicts or negative impacts on grazing operations associated with trail users.

We employ several trail management strategies to educate the public and to ensure compatible use. To help trail users access trails crossed by fences, we often use walk-through gate designs that allow easy passing but still control livestock. Signs, such as *Please Close Gate* or *Leave Gate as Found* are used on metal or wire gates.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Kirsten R. Pasero

KIRSTEN R. PASERO  
Rangeland Management Specialist



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5/30/2014

**Ben Munger**  
Ranch Manager | Midland School  
5100 Figueroa Mountain Road  
Los Olivos, California 93441

Santa Barbara County Planning Commission  
123 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara CA, 93101

Re: **Compatibility of Cattle Grazing and  
Recreational Trails—Midland School**

Dear Commissioners,

I am the ranch manager for Midland School and have acted in that capacity for over 15 years. For more than 75 years Midland School has had a cattle lease on the school's approximately 3,000 acres of property in the Santa Ynez Valley and the foothills of the San Rafael Mountains. During this time, the school has had many grazing leases and different grazing operators and some level of recreational trail use by students and members of the community. Over the last two or three decades, such recreation trail use has increased while grazing has continued. Most recently, the school, in cooperation with the Santa Barbara County Trails Council, improved approximately ten miles of unfenced trails through our grazing lands; some of these trails actually follow historic cattle trails.

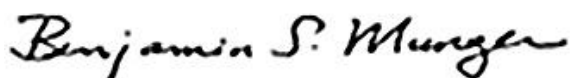
There are usually 150 cow calf pairs or 200 stockers on our ranch during the grazing season depending on the lessee. Students have access to all of the property and walk, ride horses, or bicycles along all of our trails. Our cross country team and other trail runners exercise on our trails. The school's property is also open to the public, provided they fill out a hiking or horse riding permit. Our trails experience moderate to high levels of public use particularly on weekends and depending on the time of year. All of our trails are unfenced and students and the public recreate where there are cattle, often in close proximity to grazing cattle, including calves.

We have never had a cow, calf, steer, or bull injured during at least the last 25 years besides a driver on Figueroa Mountain Road forcing a steer into a cattle guard because the steer was on the road. Figueroa Mountain Road is open range above the county bridge and cattle can be on the road legally between the bridge and the National Forest boundary. Yes, in spite of the sometimes heavy use of this road by cars, bikes and nature lovers, particularly in spring or during winter snows, only minimal problems have occurred with our open range cattle.

Midlands Schools experience with cattle grazing and trails being compatible uses is positive. There is very little trash at these public access points and there has never been an instance of animals eating or being sickened by a plastic bag. The public are respectful of our ranch rules and help us by identifying things like water troughs that are empty or damaged fences. There has not been an incident of gates being left open where cattle have gotten on the road—most of the time it is our fences that are in need of repair that allows cattle on to sections of Figueroa Mountain Road that are not open range. Because all of our trails are unfenced, trail users and cattle are frequently in close proximity, without serious negative consequences.

None of our lessees have complained about cattle losing weight because of stress caused by people walking or riding by them. There have been no incidences of people harassing livestock or complaining about livestock to the land owner. Folks are genuinely appreciative of having a place to recreate and value the experience just as it is—a mixture of wildland and ranchland. We hope that Midland School can provide a positive example of coexistence of recreational trail use with cattle grazing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin S. Munger". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name being the most prominent.

**Ben Munger**

Ranch Manager

Midland School

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June 25, 2014

Santa Barbara County Trails Council  
P O Box 22352  
Santa Barbara, CA 93121  
[www.sbtrails.org](http://www.sbtrails.org)

Re: Compatibility of Cattle Grazing and Recreational Trails

Dear Planners:

My name is Aaron Lazanoff. I have been a manager for the past the 7 years of lands that have public access. Our agency manages approximately 4000 acres of grazing land. Our grazing land typically supports 250 cow/calf pairs. There are trails throughout some of our grazing lands. The trails that we do have are not separated from the pastureland.

My experience over the past 7 years with grazing and public trails has presented many challenges, but these uses can sometimes be compatible. Problems caused by trail-users typically include failure to close gates, littering, erosion, unauthorized new trail creation, and dogs. Overall, cattle health is not significantly affected.

We employ several trail management strategies to educate the public and to ensure compatible use. These strategies include signs and self-closing gates.

Sincerely,

Aaron Lazanoff  
Beef Operations Manager  
Animal Science Department  
Cal Poly State University

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## Agriculture and Trails Questionnaire

Research and outreach performed by the Santa Barbara County Trails Council indicates that grazing is compatible with appropriate public access and trails. Numerous organizations and land management groups throughout California that currently have ongoing public access through grazing lands were contacted. To date, all organizations contacted have reported negligible issues between the public and grazing operations.

Land Management	Acreage	Miles of Trails	Type of Agriculture	Years of Coexistence	Incident Frequency
City of San Luis Obispo	700 total	9 miles	Cow/calf, stocker	15	0 – human interaction; 5x year dogs harass livestock <sup>a</sup>
East Bay Municipal Utilities District	112,000 acres	1,200 miles	Cow/calf	30+	>1 per year <sup>b</sup>
Point Reyes National Seashore	71,000	150 miles	Cow/calf, dairy	50+	>1 per year <sup>c</sup>
Los Padres National Forest	5,000 with grazing, 1.7 mil total	1,200 miles	Cow/calf, stocker, horses	100+	>1 per year <sup>d</sup>
East Bay Regional Parks Department	21,945 with year-round grazing	1,200 miles	Cow/calf (~5,000 annually)	40+	>1 per year <sup>e</sup>
Midland School	2,860		150 cow/calf pairs or 200 stockers	75+	1 incident with car, other than that never
Contra Costa Water District	20,000	53	3,000 sheep, 1500 head of cattle	13	1 ever
Bureau of Land Management - Ukiah Field Office	1132	1	cattle	9	never
Lake Berryessa Running Deer Ranch, Napa County		100 miles			
PG&E – Point Buchon Trail and Pecho Coast Trail		3.4		6	
Solano Land Trust	22,161	Varies from property to property, about 15 each	Cow/calf, stocker, sheep	Up to 25	1 incident ever
Lassen National Forest	20,000	10	Cow/calf		Gates left open annually, nothing serious
Cleveland National Forest	2500	5 miles	Cow/calf	40	1 minor incident a season

- a) Doug Carscaden, Supervising Park Ranger, City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department, 2013.
- b) Mike Silva, Watershed Naturalist, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, 2013.
- c) Dylan Voeller, Rangeland Technician, Point Reyes National Seashore, 2013.
- d) Gary Montgomery, Forest and Rangeland Specialist, Los Padres National Forest, 2013.
- e) David Amme, Vegetation Program Manager, East Bay Regional Parks Department
- f) Ben Munger, Ranch Manager, Midland School



## City of San Luis Obispo

1. **Name:** Doug Carscaden
2. **Position:** Supervising Park Ranger
3. **Contact:** dcarscad@slocity.org or 805-781-7302
4. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted?** Livestock and trails have co-existed ever since SLO acquired these properties, Bishop Peak has had livestock since they got the land 15 years ago, there are 4 open spaces with cows that each have different cattle leases, 2 of the spaces don't have cattle in the winter so the trails don't become trampled, other properties were acquired in 2000 and 2006 and have had cattle since then, the next door neighbor to Reservoir Canyon has water rights for their cattle for the past 60-70 years, kept the ranch on the Johnson Ranch property
5. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Both, some places have stockers if they are there for a short intense amount of time, some places request cattle ranchers to provide older cows so they are used to people more, roping steers in for a month sometimes if they are not going to use them, never had a bull in the breeding season but have had everything else.
6. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** 10-25 for each open space depending on the size and amount of vegetation
7. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?**
8. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** About 9.1 miles, trail is fenced, some of the open spaces have multiple pastures in them and are rotationally grazed
9. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock? If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** The only problem is when people let their dogs off leash and harass the livestock, cows usually hang out where there aren't trails so there are no reports of people being hurt, reports of dog harassment 5-10 times a year
10. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
11. **How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** N/A
12. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Fences to keep cows out of riparian areas, cattle guards, spring gates, drive through gates, signs that cows will be in the area
13. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Two of the open spaces are multi-use for hiking and biking, one is mostly hiking with a short horse segment, one is solely hiking

## East Bay Municipal Utilities District

1. **Name:** Mark Silva
2. **Position:** Watershed Naturalist
3. **Contact:** [msilva@ebmud.com](mailto:msilva@ebmud.com) or 510-287-2035.
4. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted?** Since the start of the trails system and at least as long as he's been working there, at least 30 years.
5. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cow/Calf.
6. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Number of cattle changes by leases, anywhere from 250-300 head down to 30 at any given time.
7. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Approximately 50 miles total – area is both fenced and open range. There are cross fences but there are some areas with big gaps.
8. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** About 9.1 miles, trail is fenced, some of the open spaces have multiple pastures in them and are rotationally grazed
9. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock? If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** Approximately zero annually. Approximately 8-10 years ago there was a person concerned about getting charged, but nothing happened and that was the only compliant.
10. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
11. **How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** 1 in the last 10 years
12. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Signs are posted on the trail saying that it is a grazing area and to keep the gates closed, although the gates have springs to self close. Cattle are rotated between pastures to the location of grazing and trails shift.
13. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Hikers and hors

## Point Reyes National Seashore

1. **Name:** Dylan Voeller
2. **Position:** Rangeland Technician
3. **Contact:** 415-464-5216 or Daisy Arao at 415-464-5127
4. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted?** Since the National Seashore was created probably since the 1960s.
5. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cow/Calf and dairy.
6. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Unknown.
7. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Unknown
8. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Open Range
9. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock? If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** There are very few. There was one issue with an off-leash dog harassing a calf. That's the only incident.
10. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
11. **How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** 1 in the last 10 years
12. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** There are gates and signs. Gates on pedestrian trails are spring loaded to close automatically. We're installing equestrian gates so they don't have to get off their horses. We have some fencing to keep cattle off of steep slopes and environmentally sensitive areas.
13. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Most are multiple use.

## United States Forest Service – Los Padres National Forest

1. **Name:** Gary Montgomery
2. **Position:** Forest and Rangeland Specialist
3. **Contact:** gdmontgomery@fs.fed.us. 805-925-9538 ext. 215
4. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted?** Likely for generations; however, grazing allotments were established in 1906.
5. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cow/Calf and horses.
6. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Approximately 5,000; however, the amount of cattle depends on the size and location of the allotment.
7. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Most allotments have trails in them.
8. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Open Range
9. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock? If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** Very few. We have not had any reports of dogs harassing cattle in the last few years.
10. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
11. **How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** N/A
12. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Most places are just open land. Some areas have a sign up saying that cattle are grazing but that's mostly for vehicle travel like on Figueroa Mountain. Usually the hiking trails don't have signs/fences/gates.
13. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Most are multiple use. Some are hiking only, most are hiking/equestrian; however some are OHV only.



## East Bay Regional Parks Department

<http://www.ebparks.org/stewardship/grazing>

1. **Name:** David Amme
2. **Position:** Vegetation Program Manager
3. **Contact:** 888-327-2757 ext. 2344 or damme@ebparks.org
4. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted?** Over 20 years
5. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cow/Calf that are rotated seasonal.
6. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** We graze/manage thousands of acres, so that's hard to estimate. The East Bay Regional Parks Department is one of the largest grazing organizations in California.
7. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Some allotments have 15-20 miles of trails. Total length is unknown.
8. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Open Range
9. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock? If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** Very few. Two-three times per year there will be issues with people having their dogs off leash and the dog will take off after the cow.
10. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
11. **How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** N/A
12. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** There are gates to keep the cattle in. There are signs posted at trailheads stating that cattle are grazing on the land and give people an idea of what to do and how to react to cattle if something's going on. The signs tell people not to approach the cattle, don't get between a cow and a calf, and to keep dogs under control or on a leash.
13. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Most are multiple use.

### EBRPD – Parks that have Grazing

Park	Acreage	Miles of Trails
Briones	6,117	
Garin/Dry Creek	1,200	20
Las Trampas	5,342	
Sunol	6,859	
Wildcat	2,427	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

\*\*List can be expanded with parks that have seasonal grazing, but some are with goats and sheep (<http://www.ebparks.org/stewardship/grazing/parks>).

## Bureau of Land Management Ukiah office

1. **Name:** Briana Halstead ; **Position:** Natural Resource Specialist
2. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?** Trails & livestock have coexisted on the Stornetta Public Lands near Point Arena, CA since 2004 when the SPL's were acquired from private land owners. It has been under an Interim Management Plan since then, where hiking, and minimal recreation use is allowed, but no major infrastructure or management has taken place as of yet.
3. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cattle
4. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Spread over the entire allotment (1132 acres) at any given time, the rancher typically runs about 50-60 cattle. \_Depending on the year, however, and the moisture and amount of forage- there could be as few as 15-20 or as many as 120 out there. \_The main "trail" (keeping in mind there are no constructed trails yet, only user-created trails) runs along the coastal bluff, so although they are there, the amount of cattle near or actually on this trail is likely small.
5. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** ~1 mi
6. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?**—The trail itself is not fenced off (from the livestock), however it is within a large pasture, so you could consider it fenced, I guess.
7. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** None that I am aware of.  
If yes, the how often/many? Annually? N/A
8. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** N/A
9. **~How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** N/A
10. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** All trail/public access points are pedestrian "gates" which are always open and accessible to pedestrians, but not large enough for livestock to get through.
11. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** The Stornetta Public Lands have deed restrictions that disallows motorized & mechanical vehicles- including equestrian. So the SPL is open to hikers only at this time.
12. **Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** **Y** / N
13. **Best Contact Info (phone/email):** [bhalstead@blm.gov](mailto:bhalstead@blm.gov)

## Solano Land Trust

1. **Name:** Sue Wickham ; **Position:** Project Manager
2. **How many acres does your organization manage?** 22,161 acres (broken up in different properties)
3. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?** Up to 25 years on some properties
4. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Stockers and cow calf, sheep on one property
5. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** depends, as many as 1000, some cows love to be near the trails
6. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** 13 miles, 15 miles (they have different properties with different trail lengths)
7. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?**
8. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** No
9. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** 1 incident with runners. There was a race on the property near the cows, some of the cows ran too and knocked a guy over.
10. **~How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** 1 incident ever, described above
11. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** signs on gates, separate hiker gate, after wet season they smooth trails (because of hoof prints)
12. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Yes (except the property with sheep), **no dogs**
13. **Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** **Y** / N
14. **Best Contact Info (phone/email):** [sue@solanolandtrust.org](mailto:sue@solanolandtrust.org); (707) 432-0150 ext. 207

## Cleveland National Forest

1. **Name:** Lance Criley; **Position:** Rangeland Management Specialist
2. **What is the acreage of the area with trails and grazing (approximation is fine)?** Several different areas on the forest. Highest recreational use are with grazing is @2500 acres.
3. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?** 40 years
4. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Cow/calf
5. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** 150 pairs
6. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** 5 miles **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Trail has gates where it enters grazed areas.
7. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** We have had some users frightened by cattle, and one fake charge by a bull. No injuries. Going the other way, we have many problems with people letting dogs chase cattle and with mountain bikers cutting fence at gates so they do not need to dismount. **If yes, the how many annually?** I receive at most one call a season from hikers about cattle.
8. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** No injuries.
9. **~How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?**
10. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** We have installed interpretive signs at some trailheads about cattle and have installed "mountain bike cattle guards" to try to reduce instances of fence cutting.
11. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** YES
12. **Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** Yes
13. **Best Contact Info (phone/email):** Lance Criley, 619-445-6235 ext. 3457  
lcriley@fs.fed.us



## **Lassen National Forest**

- 1. Name:** KC Pasero ; **Position:** Rangeland Mgmt. Specialist, USFS
- 2. How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?** Most trails are long existing within our grazing allotments. It varies within areas depending on whether there are recreation areas or wilderness areas. The PCT crosses a portion of the Forest.
- 3. What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Most operations are cow/calf on the Forest.
- 4. How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Varies. Sometimes could be several hundred.
- 5. Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Varies **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Open range.
- 6. Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** Sometimes but not necessarily major. Usually associated with hikers or bikers not knowing how to act around livestock, fear of livestock, or harassing livestock when encountered. Sometimes, issues with gates not being left as they are found. Often try to provide pass through gates for trail users that still control livestock.
- 7. If yes, the how often/many? Annually?** No major issues. See above.
- 8. What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** See 6 above.
- 9. How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?** Gates left open, annually. No injuries or serious incidents.
- 10. What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Gates, usually trail-user friendly, and signs such as "please close the gate".
- 11. Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Yes, all of those mentioned.
- 12. Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** **Y** / N
- 13. Best Contact Info (phone/email):** kpasero@fs.fed.us

## **Contra Costa Water District**

- 1. Name:** Mark Swisher; **Position:** Watershed Resources Specialist with Contra Costa Water District
- 2. What is the total acreage of the grazing area (approximation is fine)?**  
20,000
- 3. How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?** Since about 2000
- 4. What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?** Sheep, cow/calf, and stocker
- 5. ~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** At the peak of the growing season we can have up to 1,500 head of cattle and 3,000 sheep
- 6. Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** 53 miles of unfenced trails
- 7. Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** Internal gates are regularly left open which can be problematic when trying to segregate groups of animals. Hikers uneducated about livestock sometimes are intimidated by curious stock following them. There was one instance a few years back when a hiker was charged by a sick cow.
- 8. What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** Only the one mentioned in number 7 but the injuries were minor and the hiker was more concerned about the condition of the sick cow.
- 9. ~How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?**  
See response to 7 and 8.
- 10. What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Self closing pedestrian gates are used along the trails and all are signed requesting that trail users ensure gates close behind them. Fences are configured to limit trail crossings.
- 11. Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Yes, about 13 miles are multiple use but the rest are for hikers only.
- 12. Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** Sure.
- 13. Best Contact Info (phone/email):**

Mark Swisher  
Watershed Resources Specialist  
Contra Costa Water District  
mswisher@ccwater.com  
USPS mail: P.O. Box H20, Concord, CA 94524  
shipping: 100 Walnut Boulevard, Brentwood, CA 94513  
office: 925/240-2363  
cell: 925/890-1552  
fax: 925/513-2084

## PG&E Pecho Coast and Buchon Point Trails

1. **Name:** Sally Krenn      **Position:** Terrestrial Biologist
2. **What is the total acreage of the grazing area (approximation is fine)?**  
2000 acres for the Point Buchon Trail and 3000 for the Pecho Coast Trail
3. **How long have livestock and trails coexisted on your property?**  
Since the late 1800's
4. **What type of grazing operation (cow/calf or stocker)?**  
Point Buchon Trail - Cow/calf; goats and sheep ; Pecho Coast Trail - cow/calf and stocker
5. **~How many cattle are grazed in the vicinity of the trail(s)?** Point Buchon – 140 to 160 cow/calf; goats 200/kidding 350; sheep 100/lambing 200.
6. **Approx. length of trails across grazing lands?** Point Buchon 3.75 miles/Pecho Coast Trail – 2 miles
7. **Is the trail: fenced or open range?** Point Buchon – rotational grazing program/ hikers do hike through paddocks (people passes are installed) – Pecho- primarily open range
8. **Have major issues occurred between trail users and livestock?** No – only minor occur approximately 2 times/week ; hikers will ask where the cows are as they are afraid of them.
9. **What do incidents usually consist of? Injuries?** None
10. **~How many incidents have occurred in the last 10 years? In the last year?**  
None
11. **What trail management methods are implemented related to ag (fences, gates, signs)?** Our fences on the Point Buchon trail are electrified. Single wire for cows/mesh fencing for goats/sheep. We post signs and create people passes for the hikers. We also have an interpretive sign that describes our grazing program (attached). Pecho coast trail has barbed wire fencing with people passes and this is a docent led hike; so the docents inform the hikers that they will be hiking on a cattle ranch.
12. **Are the trails multiple use (bike, hike, horse, etc.)?** Only hiking
13. **Would you be willing to answer additional questions in the future?** Yes
14. **Best Contact Info (phone/email):** [sxk2@pge.com](mailto:sxk2@pge.com) 805-801-0288



October 8, 2021

California Coastal Commission

Via email: [hollister@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:hollister@coastal.ca.gov)

RE: Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP) Workshop – Draft HRCAP Comments

Dear Chair Padilla and Honorable Coastal Commissioners,

Gaviota Coast Conservancy (GCC) is dedicated to protecting the rural character and environmental integrity of the Gaviota Coast for present and future generations, and we've been actively pursuing our mission for 25 years. Hollister Ranch is an important part of the Gaviota Coast and GCC has been a leader in promoting limited, managed public access to Hollister Ranch coastal areas, so that its natural and cultural coastal resources can be experienced by the public in a responsible manner.

We are very grateful for Senator Monique Limón's courageous and strong leadership in bringing us to this critical moment for providing sensible, responsible access to Hollister Ranch. As a member of the HRCAP Working Group, I also want to thank the diligent efforts from the four State agencies and our working group facilitator. I also appreciate the incredible efforts on the part of my Working Group colleagues, who have brought immense collective conservation experience to bear on this issue. Thanks go to the many Hollister Ranch residents who have taken the time to reach out to me with their comments. While there has been considerable resistance to providing access to the Hollister Ranch shoreline by some, many Hollister Ranch residents have approached this work with respect and cooperation.

HRCAP General Comments:

1. **The Commission should expeditiously approve and implement the HRCAP.** The DRAFT HRCAP phases in and limits access to prevent damage to natural and cultural resources, and provides details on how to manage equitable access and protect private property rights. The DRAFT HRCAP provides for a reasonable managed access pilot program, allowing up to 100 people a day to access up to six Ranch beaches by land. Over time, visitation could be expanded in a program of adaptive management, protecting the natural and cultural resources.
2. **The Commission and State Agencies should open responsible access to Hollister Ranch promptly.** Hollister Ranch owners have benefitted by developing their parcels over many decades with the condition that the Hollister Ranch Owners' Association (HROA) provides public access through the Ranch to the public beach



areas. However, the public has been prevented from safely exercising, without undue burdens, their constitutional right to access the public beach areas at Hollister Ranch for over 40 years.

3. **The coastal trail is an important element of the HRCAP.** Currently, the California Coastal Trail (CCT) is extremely limited between Gaviota State Park and Point Sal Beach State Park. A trail through Hollister Ranch would further the Statewide vision of a continuous interconnected public trail system along the California Coast.

#### HRCAP Specific Comments:

The first five areas of the HRCAP are well documented and were extensively reviewed by the Working Group.

- **Objectives:** The Objectives of the HRCAP were discussed and reworked extensively during the Working Group process. These objectives are sound, practical and implementable.
- **Public Engagement Process:** There were ample Working Group Meetings, Surveys, Public Workshops and additional consultations to address the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program. All parties have been given numerous opportunities for input on the first 5 chapters (Ch. 2-6) of the HRCAP.
- **Existing Conditions:** Within the HRCAP, many years of studies and plans have been summarized along with new information from the State team. This information provides an important inventory of the existing conditions.
- **Access Components:** The final four transportation modes considered in HRCAP were discussed extensively within the Working Group and distilled down to these obvious, common sense approaches to access.
- **Research and Educational Opportunities:** The scientific, research and educational opportunities are important and abundant at Hollister Ranch.

#### Implementation Strategy

The implementation component of the HRCAP was not considered during our Working Group meetings in the same detail as the Objectives and Access Components.

#### Negotiate and Acquire Public Access Property Rights and Collaborate with HROA to Provide Voluntary Interim Public Access

It took more than a year for the Working Group and State Agency Team with input from the public to develop a Draft HRCAP. We appreciate the idea that Hollister Ranch would voluntarily grant interim access while permanent rights are negotiated, but without the details, this aspirational idea is difficult to rely upon. Given the resistance we experienced from Hollister Ranch residents during this process, and the long history of resistance prior to AB 1680, HRCAP does not provide sufficient details of how access rights will be

acquired, particularly if HROA is not cooperative. This is a clear deficiency, and a strategy beyond voluntary cooperation by Hollister Ranch is needed.

We appreciate that a Coastal Trail Development Strategy will be prepared.

The Pilot Phase and Implementation Phase descriptions are loosely defined with the detail left to the "Managing Entity." The Working Group could have provided strong assistance with these proposed Phases but was not consulted.

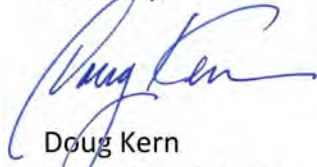
According to the HRCAP, the Managing Entity will design and implement many details yet to be determined. The Draft HRCAP could be improved by specifying the needed qualities, skills, capacity, oversight and funding mechanisms for the Managing Entity. Managed, limited and responsible access are essential to protecting not only Hollister Ranch resources, but the mechanisms developed and lessons learned will be valuable and perhaps, applicable to the entire Gaviota Coast.

The Cost Estimates and the Site Conceptual Plans are appreciated as initial starting points.

The entire Gaviota Coast will benefit from the time and effort focused on the HRCAP by the State agencies, HRCAP Working Group and public comment. The Managing Entity could play a major role not only at Hollister Ranch, but influence and perhaps, address long standing concerns for the Gaviota Coast, a worldwide biodiversity hotspot, as well as a cultural resource area of importance not only to the living descendants of these lands but to the entire planet.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Doug Kern  
Executive Director



# Fire Department

*"Serving the community since 1926"*

## HEADQUARTERS

4410 Cathedral Oaks Road  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110-1042  
(805) 681-5500 FAX: (805) 681-5563

Mark A. Hartwig  
Fire Chief  
County Fire Warden

Rob Heckman  
Deputy Fire Chief  
Administration

Woody Enos  
Deputy Fire Chief  
Operations

October 8, 2021

California Coastal Commission  
725 Front Street, Suite 300  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear California Coastal Commission:

### **SUBJECT: Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program**

Santa Barbara County Fire has reviewed the Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program document and offers these comments:

#### **Access**

As noted in the Draft Plan overland access is only possible via Rancho Real Road. It is critical that this road remain as unrestrained by traffic congestion as possible to maintain viability as the primary access/egress route for residents and emergency responders. Any plan to increase traffic along Rancho Real could result in significant negative impacts to public safety. The Fire Department recommends that a comprehensive evacuation study be completed for the Hollister Ranch before establishing maximum daily visitor capacity. The current proposed maximum potential capacity of 500 people per day is concerning and would not be supported without more comprehensive objective analysis.

Access to the Hollister Ranch from Highway 101 is via an uncontrolled intersection which can be extremely hazardous. Additionally, Gaviota Beach Road crosses Gaviota Creek via a low bridge/summer crossing that frequently floods during the winter rendering it impassable for hours or days. Consideration should be given to rebuilding the Gaviota Creek

crossing to minimize this possibility. The Fire Department recommends this be done before implementing the Hollister Ranch Access Plan.

### **Operations and Management**

The Draft Plan describes the development and implementation of a Public Safety plan to include emergency communications, response protocols, evacuation plans, and facilities. This plan should include the establishment of onsite daily minimum staffing of lifeguards and rangers. A responsible agency in the county should be designated to provide these services and adequate funding secured.

### **Wildfire Prevention**

Currently, the Hollister Ranch HOA has responsibility for conducting annual roadside vegetation management along Rancho Real Road as well as around the beach access secondary roads, parking areas and cabanas. Any public access plan should incorporate public funding to support these efforts to ensure wildfire ignitions are prevented. Prescribed herbivory (grazing) is an essential component of wildfire mitigation on the Hollister Ranch and any disruption to the current cattle grazing operations should be minimized to the extent possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft plan. Santa Barbara County Fire looks forward to working with the Coastal Commission and the State Coastal Conservancy to provide a plan consistent with the needs of public safety.

As always, if you have any questions or require further information, please call 681-5554 or 681-5523.

In the interest of life and fire safety,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Hazard', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Hazard  
Division Chief/ Fire Marshal





October 8, 2021

To: John Ainsworth, Executive Director  
Alison Dettmer, Chief Deputy Director  
Sarah Christie, Legislative Director  
Linda Locklin, Public Access Program Manager

**RE: Draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Plan**

Maximum coastal access to the California Coast is a fundamental right for Californians inscribed in the Coastal Act. The draft Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Plan (Plan) makes clear that there is a reasonable solution to balanced public access at the Hollister Ranch Coastline. Surfrider supports solutions that protect the rights of the residents of Hollister Ranch and protect the coastal environment while providing the public with the appropriate level of access to the coastline at the Ranch as required under the Coastal Act and AB 1680 (Limón)

Coastal access is protected in the California constitution and is an important public right worth restoring and protecting at Hollister Ranch and everywhere else on the California Coast. The Plan offers a reasonable and cautious phased approach to implementing public access to this otherwise inaccessible 8.5 miles of coastline. Access to this portion of coastline is clearly called for by state law and long overdue, as described in the Plan.

Santa Barbara County is known as an access poor county. While securing public access to the Hollister Ranch Coastline is important, the Coastal Commission and Santa Barbara County should address the lack of access holistically by taking a county-wide approach. Over fifty miles of the Gaviota Coast have remained inaccessible for decades. Other locations may offer less complex accessways with potential access points closer to the coast where public access infrastructure may be more easily implemented and affordable. This regional approach should be kept in mind when determining the appropriate access program at Hollister Ranch.

**Overall, Surfrider supports the Plan and urges the Commission to approve and implement the Plan.** The plan phases in and limits access to prevent damage to natural and cultural resources. It balances equitable access with private property rights. The managed access pilot program proposes up to 100 people a day to access up to six Hollister Ranch beaches over 8.5 miles by land and could be expanded subject to the protection of natural and cultural resources. The fully operational access phase should determine the maximum daily visitors based on monitoring and analysis of the pilot program and be adaptively managed based on ongoing monitoring.

In addition, several important modifications should be made to the plan to ensure equitable access and minimal coastal resource impacts. We offer the following comments and suggestions:

1. **The Plan should prioritize access for environmental justice communities.** Environmental justice communities and potential visitors with low income should have priority for visiting the Ranch. Maximum daily visitor slots, shuttle services and facilitated access should all be clearly and specifically designed to first be available to low income and disadvantaged communities who may not have internet access. Otherwise, the small daily access limitations may otherwise be quickly taken up by affluent, able-bodied, internet savvy, recreationalists eager for an adventure that could similarly be provided in other locations or who may otherwise be able to access this portion of the coast by other means. We strongly support a shuttle-based program with pick-ups in environmental justice communities. We also suggest the Plan include a robust program with facilitated access for youth-based community groups targeting disadvantaged communities.
2. **Surfrider strongly supports the Chumash Cultural Access and suggests this program be expanded.** The Plan will improve access and allow for cultural activities on the Hollister Ranch Coastline and allows for some special locations for private ceremony. We strongly recommend that a clear and distinct provision for cultural access be included in all phases of access implementation. This should not be limited to shuttle-based access and should be expanded to other coastal bands and tribes who may not be included in the Chumash designation.
3. **The Plan should include a robust environment and habitat protection, monitoring and enforcement program to minimize potential impacts from visitors and associated infrastructure.** Public access and environmental and habitat protection are not necessarily mutually exclusive. These protections should be maximized throughout each phase of implementation to ensure this pristine stretch of coastline is kept that way.
4. **The coastal trail is an important element of the Plan.** Currently, the California Coastal Trail is limited to only 5 miles on the beach among the 50 miles between Gaviota State Park and Point Sal Beach State Park. A trail through Hollister Ranch would further the Statewide vision of a continuous interconnected public trail system along the California Coast. The trail should be located in such a manner that it will not require shoreline armoring as sea levels rise.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we look forward to finalizing this Plan and moving forward with long awaited access to this pristine portion of California Coast.

Sincerely,



Mandy Sackett  
California Policy Coordinator  
Surfrider Foundation



## SUPPORTING NATURE CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, AND EDUCATION ON THE GAVIOTA COAST

October 8, 2021

California Coastal Commission  
Sacramento, CA

RE: **Comments on HRCAP Draft Plan**

Dear Commissioners:

Coastal Ranches Conservancy has been supporting nature conservation, restoration, and education on both public and private lands along the Gaviota Coast since 2003. We believe the highest value of the Gaviota Coast is ecological, as a biodiversity reserve. While we recognize there are impacts from residential and agricultural activities that currently impact the region's biodiversity, many of these impacts can be mitigated by improved land management, based upon an understanding of the resources that need protection.

Today, beach recreation all along the Gaviota Coast is limited by the difficulty of accessing the beach. One-half of the 20 miles of the coastline between Ellwood and Gaviota State Park is owned by the State, yet even here limited parking along the highway precludes intensive beach use except at the state parks of El Capitan, Refugio, and Gaviota. For those willing to make the extra effort, this difficulty of access limits human disturbance and allows users a high-quality, more-private beach experience. It also allows wildlife to utilize the marine resources found along the shoreline. West of Gaviota State Park, the Hollister Ranch, Dangermond Preserve, and Vandenberg AFB also limit beach access to the extent that wildlife like black bear, mountain lions, bobcats, deer, and coyotes make extensive and regular use of the beaches. When examining the impact of an increased number of visitors to Gaviota beaches, the impacts of the additional human disturbance on these largely upland species of wildlife must be considered. We invite you to read "Marine to Terrestrial Subsidies on the Gaviota Coast" by Dr. Hillary Young, <https://coastalranchesconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Gaviota-Coast-Subsidies.pdf> for some of the scientific background to this issue.

If there was a "recreational master plan" for the entire 74-mile-long Gaviota Coast, (and there should be), it would certainly identify areas where recreational activities should be minimized in order to protect the needs of wildlife. This recreation plan would also look at areas that are already disturbed and have more limited ecological value as locations appropriate for more visitors. We encourage the Commission to take this broader approach and look at the entire region when answering the question of where and how many additional visitors should be accommodated at the Hollister Ranch. With 24 million people in Southern California, we anticipate this issue will continue to be an important one for the Gaviota Coast in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Kim Kimbell", is positioned above the printed name.

Kim Kimbell  
President

Submitted via email to [Hollister@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:Hollister@coastal.ca.gov)

**Th4**

October 8, 2021

California Coastal Commission  
725 Front Street, Suite 300  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Honorable Commissioners,

The California Cattlemen's Foundation (CCF) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access program. CCF represents the interests of all ranchers in California, many of which have been ranching in coastal communities for generations, including the active ranching operations at Hollister Ranch. As century long stewards of the land, California ranchers' reliance on the land inherently demands respect and support of the natural land. It is this land and ecosystem along the coast that the Coastal Act seeks to protect, and while we are encouraged that the public sees the value in the land that ranchers at Hollister Ranch have been working on and protecting for centuries, it is imperative that the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and the agricultural community at large work together to ensure that California can continue to have agriculturally productive open space for generations to come.

Within the Coastal Act (Act), there are three clear priorities: the preservation of agriculture, increased public access, and protection of resources. The Act is clear in its identification of the importance of agriculture on the coast and goes to great lengths to express certain flexibilities for agriculture to ensure the continuation of open space that agriculture naturally produces as a co-benefit of sustainable food production.

In fact, Public Resources Code Section 30610.1 (b) prioritizes "agricultural lands currently in production" in the same way that it does "highly scenic resources of public importance," "environmentally sensitive areas," and "public access to or along the coast." Despite the clear valuation of agriculture, current interpretations of the Coastal Act misrepresent the original intent to place the preservation of agriculture, resource protection, and enhanced public access on par with each other. Instead of supporting these three tenants wholly, the Coastal Act has been misconstrued to the point that many think resource protection and agriculture are mutually exclusive, when in fact, resource protection relies on the sustainability of agriculture.

Farmers and ranchers are in the business of protecting their land and ensuring its continued productivity. In so doing, they are likely to make decisions that promote both the health of the land and the sustainability of their businesses. When considered from this perspective, it is evident that the CCC and CCF share the same overall goals of preserving open space and viable agricultural land. Although both the CCC and the agricultural community share a very similar vision, many CCC-developed regulations prohibit farmers and ranchers from continuing to manage the land and provide the habitat, open space, and agricultural products that we all love. CCF encourages the CCC to consider the ramifications of these regulations on agriculture and the larger goal of open space maintenance. While CCF understands that public access is one of the priorities of the CCC and equitable methods for public access must be ascertained, we would



like to remind the CCC that agriculture is an equal priority and the interests of the two must be balanced before action is taken.

Cattle grazing is a key conservation strategy that provides significant benefits to wildlife and the local ecology. Rangeland is a unique ecosystem with important environmental tools such as carbon sequestration and soil regeneration, among others. Ranching is often an under-utilized and perhaps misunderstood industry, but it is a significant part of California's character and legacy. CCF would like to emphasize that ranchers are able and willing to aid the CCC in its conservation efforts as experts in land management. In order to maintain this valuable partnership, CCF strongly urges the CCC to make certain considerations when developing access plans.

It is of vital importance that the CCC consider the public safety concerns of allowing the public on active grazing lands as well as the concerns for the health of the cattle and the land they reside on. For example, typical uses of the pastures included in the Plan that the public will be using are areas for bulls during the off season for breeding and a large area for first-calf heifers where they are monitored at all times in case of difficulty of calving. Using these lands for public access is inappropriate not only because of potential danger to the livestock, but also to the public particularly with the trail-based access and bicycle-based access. Additionally, water supplies for cattle along this section of the coast is scarce, especially during drought. The public facilities contemplated in the Plan are likely to use far more water than is available for livestock.

These are just a few of the considerations that should be included in the CCC's analysis when determining a balance of agriculture interests and public access interests. Balancing is part of the core mission of the CCC and CCF is concerned that the land interests of ranchers are not being considered in these decisions. We implore you to continue to partner with agriculture when interpreting and developing policy and take the time to understand the issues important to ranchers and farmers in California's Coastal Zone and throughout the state.

Sincerely,



Victoria Rodriguez  
Public Policy Advocate

February 1, 2021

Trish Chapman  
Central Coast Regional Manager  
State Coastal Conservancy  
1515 Clay Street, 10th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612-1401

*Delivered via e-mail [trish.chapman@scc.ca.gov](mailto:trish.chapman@scc.ca.gov) and US Certified Mail*

Dear Ms. Chapman:

On behalf of the Hollister Ranch (“Ranch”) owners who participated in the December 1, 2020 “Listening Session” Zoom call that you and the other state officials hosted, we want to thank you and the other state officials along with Participation by Design and KTUA, for taking the time to organize and participate in the call. While we have some concerns about the session, outlined below, we remain committed to working with you and the other state officials to develop an appropriate AB 1680 public access plan.

We think it is constructive to summarize the significant points made during the call and we do that below. Further, many of us took notes that we have combined into a single document accompanying this letter<sup>1</sup>. (We request that if an audio or visual recording was made of the call you will provide us with a copy).

### **Key Ranch Qualities**

After introductions, Lewis Michaelson of Participation by Design asked the Hollister Ranch owners to say what we loved most about the Hollister Ranch beaches, and each owner gave a minute or so summary. The words from the notes ranged from descriptions of the “wildness” and “pristine” nature of the beaches, along with some examples ranging from deer swimming in the ocean to the dramatic erosion of the cliffs during high tides and the impressive natural beach wrack. One owner mentioned the magical nature of the Hollister Ranch, stemming from the history of the Chumash once living there. Some provided stories of the public tours the Hollister Ranch provides to groups like the Audubon Society, while others described their personal experiences herding cattle on the wild coastline. The wild and undisturbed nature of the beaches stands out as a hallmark of the Hollister Ranch experience and its attraction, and we believe that came through in the Hollister Ranch owners’ comments<sup>2</sup>.

### **Current Public Access Programs**

You asked us about some of the specific public access programs already offered by the Hollister Ranch, and three owners gave detailed summaries of the programs they lead.

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<sup>1</sup> We invite any comments or suggested edits regarding the attached notes.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., the Hollister Ranch website at <https://www.hollisterranch.org>.

Wendie Kruthers described the long-running Hollister Ranch tidepool program focused on elementary and junior high school level children and serving up to 800 members of the public in Santa Barbara County each year. She stressed the planning that goes into each event, the heavy education component designed to prepare teachers and others accompanying the children, as well as the children themselves, for the natural dangers and challenges at the Hollister Ranch (tides, cliffs, rough water, lack of amenities, lack of emergency response resources, etc.) and the protected and threatened, sometimes endangered, species they are likely to encounter. The children generally visit the tidepools at the Hollister Ranch Shoreline Preserve at the east end of the Hollister Ranch and are taught the “no take” rules by paid docents from UCSB, Santa Barbara Community College, and the Sea Center designed to leave all biological resources intact and undisturbed after each visit.

Michael Parsons described the wounded military veterans surfing program he has organized at the Hollister Ranch annually for a number of years at Bulito Beach<sup>3</sup>. Each participating veteran is accompanied by another individual assigned responsibility for that vet in and out of the water. Michael explained the challenges of hosting the event on a wild California beach without the usual amenities, much less those specifically designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities. He said that the normal high tide during the event reaches the base of the cliffs and the vets often need to be safely escorted off the beach. He said vets have told him they appreciate the event, in part, because there is only a small number of other people, if any, on the beach. The vets say that at public beaches people sometimes stare (some of the vets have missing limbs), making them feel awkward and uncomfortable.

Anne Parsons described the Audubon Society bird sighting and counting events at the Hollister Ranch. She pointed out that they are organized around the specific times of the year when bird species are migrating through the Hollister Ranch, or otherwise may be more prolific or active. She mentioned other nature preserves in Santa Barbara County where she serves as a docent and how they are comparable to the Hollister Ranch. She explained the substantial education process required before docent-led groups can visit the other preserves and indicated that the approach at those other preserves would work well at the Hollister Ranch.

Pat Dennis and others, including Matt Jarvis, expressed the view that most Hollister Ranch owners would likely support more managed access like the programs described, as part of the AB 1680 process.

### **Challenges**

In response to various questions posed by the facilitator, Hollister Ranch owners pointed out a number of challenges in bringing large, or unsupervised, groups into the Hollister Ranch beaches.

The Hollister Ranch coastline is undeveloped and has a number of substantial natural hazards. Foremost is the relatively narrow sand/rock beach backed up in most locations by cliffs, which are in many places a barrier to ingress and egress to or from the beach and safer

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on this program see [www.operationsurf.org](http://www.operationsurf.org).

ground well above the high tide line. Between one or both of the two high tides each day there is usually water and often surf right at the base of steep cliffs, which means there are daily circumstances where there is no escape from the beach for the casual and unsuspecting visitor. Josh Farberow, the Hollister Ranch Manager, reinforced the point by noting the frequency of rescues he, and our Hollister Ranch security team, perform each year, not just for Hollister Ranch owners and guests, but also the general public who visit the Hollister Ranch by boat or walk in. Other Hollister Ranch owners described their firsthand experiences with these dangers and concerns.

A number of Hollister Ranch owners familiar with or who work with the cattle cooperative observed that cattle roam over the vast majority of the Hollister Ranch lands, including the beaches, and it is not unusual to see full grown cattle, perhaps dozens in a group, standing on or walking across a road, or grazing near, or just off, the beach. Hollister Ranch owners know this and drive defensively on the roads and are similarly cautious when hiking on Hollister Ranch property. Hollister Ranch owners and knowledgeable guests instinctively give the cattle a wide berth when they are confronted on Hollister Ranch land, including along the coast. And, at times, the road is impassable due to cattle crossing or standing on it. We do not allow guests or the general public to wander into the intensive cattle operation areas and we urge them to avoid potentially dangerous areas such as bull pens and calves with the mothers.

The main paved road through the Hollister Ranch is not a public road and does not meet California state requirements for public road width, striping, shoulders, a central divider, lighting, or road signs. In many places it is barely wide enough for two cars to fit and owners often move off the pavement (where the shoulder allows) when a large truck or other vehicle approaches. And perhaps most importantly, the railroad crossings from the main road to various beach access points have no guardrails, sirens, flashing lights, or other automated warnings or barriers to prevent collisions with fast moving trains, which do not stop in the Hollister Ranch. In response to one of the questions, a number of us made the point that Hollister Ranch owners don't typically ride bikes (of any kind), jog, or hike along the main paved road – it is simply too dangerous even for those with substantial experience in the Ranch.

Pat Dennis explained that the Hollister Ranch requires guests and managed access groups to sign a waiver and release of liability before entering, in part because of these natural and other hazards. Further, all managed access groups must provide proof of adequate insurance. He said one concern of Hollister Ranch owners is that anyone not signing the liability waiver and release *and* providing proof of insurance would expose the Hollister Ranch and its owners to personal injury and other claims.

Ed De La Rosa reinforced the need for an emphasis on safety for any public access program. He described the written allocation of liability among just the different owners of his Hollister Ranch parcel – an allocation that anticipates potential injuries to guests. Without broad, executed releases and evidence of sufficient liability insurance, an unmanaged public access program would dramatically increase the risks of lawsuits faced by Hollister Ranch owners.

A consistent theme was the need to protect the unspoiled natural resources at the Hollister Ranch. Many of us expressed concern that unmanaged activities - without training, oversight, and supervision, would destroy the unique natural resource treasures that make the Hollister



Ranch so special. Elaine Tumonis, among others, made the point that there are already accessible public beaches in Santa Barbara County where any member of the public can now drive to a beach, park in a public area, and enjoy the sand and sea for recreational purposes. But access to the Hollister Ranch offers an opportunity for visitors to experience a wild, pristine beach, well preserved in its natural state, and educational and research opportunities associated with the natural, cultural, and historical resources and access that complements protection and preservation of these resources is a key goal of the AB 1680. Carla Scheidlinger summarized the concern that unfettered, unsupervised public access would result in the Hollister Ranch being “loved to death.” Matt Jarvis emphasized the unique educational opportunity offered by the Ranch – the ability to observe the original wild California coast as it has been undisturbed for eons. This is an educational experience now rare along the California coast but only sustainable with careful consideration of nature’s “carrying capacity.”

### **Wind Wolves Preserve Example**

Sarah Christie said she detected “fear” in our comments, although we don’t recall anyone using that word and it was not our intent to convey it. Ms. Christie then spoke about a different ranch in central California where she had previously resided called Wind Wolves Preserve, owned by the Wildlands Conservancy. She said it is both a working cattle and sheep ranch and also offers pristine natural habitat, people hike through that ranch, sometimes with dogs, and close ranch gates when so instructed.

Ed De La Rosa responded that he serves on the Nature Conservancy Board and has some familiarity with Wind Wolves Preserve, and that the access approach there is not the only way to achieve public access to a pristine and wild location. Pat Dennis pointed out that it sounded like the Wind Wolves Preserve was either owned or managed by a single entity (i.e. the Wildlands Conservancy). Yet, by contrast, the Hollister Ranch has more than 500 individual owners, each with his/her own idea of what level of privacy they expect and what level of public access they would agree to – especially if it involves public access to, across, or over that owner’s private property.

Given the impromptu description of the Wind Wolves Preserve, we were not able to provide an informed response or reaction during the Listening Session. Since the call we’ve learned that the Wind Wolves Preserve covers a vast, unpopulated terrain. It is not located on the coast and thus not adjacent to wild open ocean, a well-recognized and often used recreational area, nor does it appear to include a ten-mile paved road that is not in compliance with state public road requirements. Similarly, there is no sensitive coastal habitat belt with endangered and threatened species nor, to our knowledge, are there important Chumash cultural resources at the Preserve. While we appreciate the success of Wind Wolves Preserve, we don’t believe that ranch and the Hollister Ranch are comparable. The open ocean, wild beaches, endangered species, recreational areas, large number of owners, and Chumash cultural resources, combined with the cliffs and other natural hazards, detailed above, do not equate with a single-owner inland ranch.

### **Concerns about the Video**

The video played for the Hollister Ranch owners to watch during the Listening Session was not helpful and did not accurately portray the complete picture. It purported to be a history of various efforts by the State to obtain more public access into the Hollister Ranch. At various points the video characterized the Hollister Ranch owners' historic positions as without merit or were asserted in bad faith<sup>4</sup>. There was no disclaimer at the beginning of the video that it had been solely prepared by state agencies that have been adverse to the Hollister Ranch in litigation. Nor was there any disclaimer that the Hollister Ranch had not been consulted regarding the video. The video made no mention of the many existing public access programs, referenced above, that the Hollister Ranch has continuously offered, for decades, to youth, wildlife enthusiasts, scientists and educators, and persons with disabilities or from disadvantaged communities. Nor did the video share that the public has always accessed the Hollister Ranch by hiking in along the beach and boating in. Further, the video made no mention of the fact that the Hollister Ranch has preserved and maintained intact the land and its biological and cultural resources for decades as a wild and uniquely pristine place.

If the state agencies responsible for the development of the 1680 plan have been showing this video at the outset of other Listening Sessions, then it calls into question the validity of any response given by someone after seeing the video. Even a person vaguely familiar with the true chronology of the public access disputes between Hollister Ranch and the state, would likely feel antagonism against the Hollister Ranch owners after seeing the video. On the heels of the video, to then be asked what form and how much public access to the Hollister Ranch should be demanded by the 1680 process would elicit responses fueled by ramped-up anger at Hollister Ranch owners. Any comments solicited right after watching the one-sided video will be systematically skewed and, thus, unreliable and uninformed.<sup>5</sup>

In subsequent conversations with you, we were gratified to learn you and KTUA are no longer showing the video. The Hollister Ranch respectfully asks that, in an effort to foster understanding and respect for the preservation of natural and cultural resources at the Hollister Ranch, a more balanced presentation of the situation be offered by the Coastal Commission on their website and in videos for use in the AB 1680 process.

### **Our Concerns about the Survey**

There were similar issues with the survey that was attempted to be administered during the final quarter of the Listening Session and we are pleased to subsequently learn that it will not be used. The survey identified walking, bikes, e-bikes, private vehicles, shuttles, and rail. The survey asked Hollister Ranch owners to rank each mode on a scale of 1 to 5. Before responding,

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<sup>4</sup> These may not be the exact words used in the video, but we don't think there is any doubt that was the result the video intended to convey. We were not given a copy of the video so we cannot quote it. We request a copy.

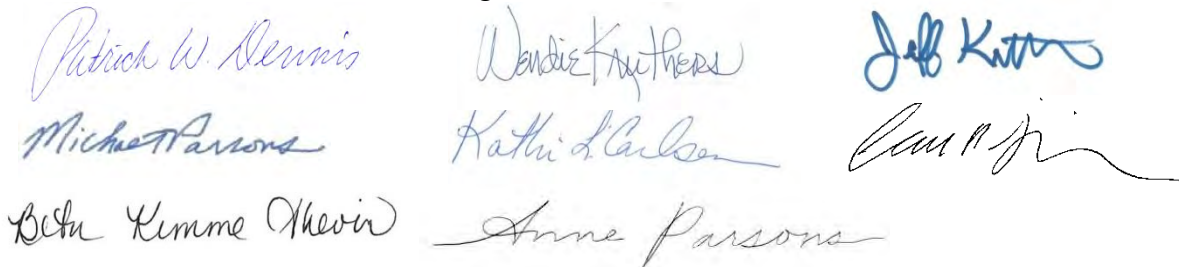
<sup>5</sup> To be clear, we did not make any of these points in response to the video during the Listening Session. Quite frankly, most of us were stunned and angered after watching it and wanted to move the session to what we had understood to be its purpose – for state officials to “listen” to Hollister Ranch owners regarding what types of public access into the Hollister Ranch are appropriate, feasible, and consistent with AB 1680.

Ranch owners asked that each proposed mode be more fully described (i.e., walking on the beach or on private property) and if the infrastructure necessary for each of these modes of access was somehow either assumed, or imbedded, in the survey question. Many of us pointed out that there is presently no appropriate infrastructure for any of these access modes with respect to unfettered public access. Since the existing road is unsafe for walking and biking, it is impossible to rank these modes of access without including the cost to acquire the land, construct, and maintain the infrastructure necessary to allow safe walking and biking through the Hollister Ranch and down to the beach. Similarly, owners expressed the concerns voiced earlier, that the existing road is not fit for open-to-the public automobile access and there is no infrastructure for parking nor maintained staircases down to the beach from the cliffs. Owners said that asking people to rank modes of access when cost and feasibility are completely ignored seemed inappropriate<sup>6</sup>. Ultimately, Lewis Michaelson suggested to the participants that we move on in the session and the survey was not completed.

We are very concerned that if the results of the survey as administered in various listening sessions are used to materially inform the development of the AB 1680 public access plan then the survey results will not reflect any consideration of either cost or feasibility to implement any of the modes of access. In essence the public is being asked to assume that any one of the modes is equally viable – i.e., affordable and feasible – which is not true. Worse, the survey assumes at least one of the modes is affordable – which is simply unknown. We urge you and the other state officials charged with developing the AB 1680 plan to disregard the survey results as not representative of an informed public response.

### Next Steps

The Listening Session ended about two hours after it began and we sincerely appreciate the effort by the state agencies and the consultant team to organize and host the event. We closed the Listening Session by reiterating our commitment to work together and asking for more opportunities to discuss the AB 1680 public access plan with state officials. We look forward to working with you, your agency colleagues, and the consultant team to develop successful and inclusive opportunities for land-based access that complement the spectacular natural, cultural, and historical wonders found throughout the Ranch.



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<sup>6</sup> At one point during the discussion about the survey you said that the surfers had no trouble filling out the survey during their listening session. Yet we understand there was at least one well-known surfer, Sam George, who said that he didn't think the survey covered his preferred mode of transportation into the Hollister Ranch – by private boat which he has done for years. We understand he was asked by you not to participate in the survey as a result. If that is incorrect, please advise.

Cc: Lewis Michaelson (KTUA, moderator)  
Linda Locklin (CA Coastal Commission)  
Wendy Hall (CA State Lands Commission)  
Jim Newland (CA State Parks)