

#### Staff Report to the Zoning Administrator Application Number: 181556

Applicant: Jamie Knowlton

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation

Lands LLC

APN: 106-291-16

Site Address: No Address on file

Agenda Date: November 15, 2019

Agenda Item #: 1

Time: After 9:00 a.m.

Project Description: Proposal to operate a business where families and individuals spread the ashes of loved ones around a selected tree within a protected forested area, construct a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure with one bathroom and storage, and create parking areas for 15 vehicles, located in the TP (Timber Production) and SU (Special Use) zone districts, and a determination that this project is categorically exempt from further review under CEQA

Location: Property located on the north side of Buzzard Lagoon Road approximately ½ mile from the intersection of Eureka Canyon Road, Highland Way, and Ormsby Cutoff.

Permits Required: Commercial Development Permit

Supervisorial District: District 1 (District Supervisor: John Leopold)

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

- Determine that the proposal is exempt from further Environmental Review under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Approval of Application 181556, based on the attached findings and conditions.

#### Project Background

Prior to applying for a Commercial Development Permit, the applicant requested a consultation (PA181001) to establish a clear path to obtain a permit for their proposed project. After consideration of the unique use, it was determined their use would be considered under the category of organized camps and facilities defined as "a site having facilities for the purpose of conducting a supervised program which provides educational, spiritual, social, or recreational elements." The applicant also applied for a Rural Density Matrix Determination to determine the maximum allowable number of day-use visitors to the site per year which came to 10,950.

#### **Project Description & Setting**

The subject parcel is approximately 84 acres in size located in a rural unincorporated section of

County of Santa Cruz Planning Department 701 Ocean Street, 4th Floor, Santa Cruz CA 95060

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands, LLC

Santa Cruz County. The currently undeveloped site is heavily forested with varying terrain with slopes ranging from 10 to 50 percent in some sections. Access to the site is from Buzzard Lagoon Road which is approximately 9 miles north of the Corralitos Market and Sausage Company. Most of the parcel is zoned TP (Timber Production) with a small portion zoned SU (Special Use). This site is fairly isolated from other development. Adjacent parcels north, south, and east are zoned SU (Special Use). The parcel directly above the site is a youth camp and parcels east appear to be either undeveloped or contain a single-family dwelling. To the south is a parcel owned by the State of California and west of the site is zoned TP (Timber Production).

The applicant proposes to operate a business where people may spread their loved ones' ashes around a selected tree located within a protected forested area maintained by the applicant, Better Place Forests. The applicant proposes to maintain the native forest through periodic timber harvesting in hopes to enhance timber stands towards an old growth type ecosystem, increase biodiversity, reduce the fire hazard risk, and eradicate non-native species. Their goal is to maintain a healthy physical environment with minimal impact from people and structures. To facilitate visitor use of the site, the applicant is proposing several improvements including minor driveway access improvements from Buzzard Lagoon Road to comply with Cal Fire requirements, a parking area for 15 parking spaces including one accessible parking spot, and construction of a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure that will have a bathroom and storage with roof-mounted solar panels. All improvements will be in areas previously disturbed during past timber harvests.

Depending on the season, the site will be open to the public between two and seven days per week. There will be at least one employee onsite during business hours. The general public may visit the site during daytime hours only and guests are required to schedule an appointment before visiting the site. The applicant anticipates limited weekday visitation with most of the visits to occur over the weekend, approximately 20 to 30 visitors each day. There will be a total of 15 parking spaces onsite. It is anticipated most people will carpool to the site since historically an average of two to four family members have driven to other similar sites owned and operated by the same company.

The proposed use will allow people to visit this site for multiple reasons including tree selection, spreading ashes of a loved one under a selected tree, walking the trails, and visiting trees dedicated to family and friends. Spreading ceremonies will be limited to immediate family members only. Prior to the ceremony, the cremated remains are mixed with local soil to ensure ashes are not visually distinguishable in the mixture, and to ensure there are no adverse environmental impacts. No spreading will take place within active bed or banks of any watercourse, wetland habitat or within 150 feet of a fish-bearing stream.

The proposed project and use fall under the category of organized camps and facilities. This use requires a Commercial Development Permit considered at a public hearing before the Zoning Administrator.

#### **Zoning & General Plan Consistency**

The subject property is approximately 84 acres, located in the TP (Timber Production) and SU (Special Use) zone districts, designations which allow the proposed use. The proposed use is a principal permitted use within the zone district and the zoning is consistent with the site's R-M (Mountain Residential) General Plan designation. The proposed use falls under the category of organized camps which is an allowed use in the zone district. To determine development potential

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and density for the site, in this case the number of allowed day use visitors, a Rural Density Matrix Determination was required. Pursuant to the matrix, one parcel equates to one matrix unit. One matrix unit allows for a maximum of 10,950 day use visitors per year, or 30 day use visitors per day.

#### Soils & Geologic Review

An updated geotechnical and geologic study and fault evaluation, dated September 9, 2019, was performed by UPP Geotechnology for the subject site. The updated study referenced an original geotechnical and geologic report dated December 11, 2014. According to the Geologic Map of the Loma Prieta Quadrangle, landslide deposits are mapped across a majority of the site. The property is also within the San Andreas fault zone. The original report from 2014 concluded the landslide underlying the proposed bathroom and storage structure is likely to move sixteen (16) feet in the event of a major earthquake in the area. Environmental Planning staff determined this is too large to allow habitable structures; therefore, staff has conditioned that the structure be strictly non-habitable with recommended conditions of approval.

#### **Biotic Review**

A Biotic Assessment was prepared by Ecosystems West to determine if protected species and plants would be affected by the proposed improvements. Most of the area proposed for development is presently bare ground or dense wood litter. No sensitive plant or animal species indigenous near the site were observed on the parcel during the time of the survey. If development begins during the breeding season, a comprehensive breeding bird survey will be required. If nesting birds are observed, appropriate buffers will be required prior to development.

#### **Design Review**

The proposed bathroom and storage facility for the project complies with the requirements of the County Design Review Ordinance. As part of the proposed use, the applicant is proposing to construct a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure that will include a bathroom and storage. Materials proposed for this structure are metal shingles and panels and wood siding with earth tone colors that will blend with the natural environment. The proposed structure will not be visible from the street or neighboring properties due to its proposed location which is surrounded by trees.

#### Conclusion

As proposed and conditioned, the project is consistent with all applicable codes and policies of the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan/LCP. Please see Exhibit "B" ("Findings") for a complete listing of findings and evidence related to the above discussion.

#### Staff Recommendation

- Determine that the proposal is exempt from further Environmental Review under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- APPROVAL of Application Number 181556, based on the attached findings and

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands, LLC

#### conditions.

Supplementary reports and information referred to in this report are on file and available for viewing at the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, and are hereby made a part of the administrative record for the proposed project.

The County Code and General Plan, as well as hearing agendas and additional information are available online at: <a href="https://www.sccoplanning.com">www.sccoplanning.com</a>

Report Prepared By: Elizabeth Cramblet

Santa Cruz County Planning Department

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#### **Exhibits**

- A. Categorical Exemption (CEQA determination)
- B. Findings
- C. Conditions
- D. Project plans
- E. Assessor's, Location, Zoning and General Plan Maps
- F. Parcel information
- G. Geotechnical & Geologic Report Review Letter
- H. Biotic Report Review Letter
- I. Program Statement

### CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

The Santa Cruz County Planning Department has reviewed the project described below and has determined that it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified in Sections 15061 - 15332 of CEQA for the reason(s) which have been specified in this document.

Application Number: 181556 Assessor Parcel Number: 106-291-16 Project Location: No Situs Address	
<b>Project Description:</b> Proposal to operate a business where families and individuals spread the ashes of loved ones around a selected tree within a protected forested area construct a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure with one bathroom and storage, and create parking areas for 15 vehicles.	
Person or Agency Proposing Project: Jamie Knowlton, CFO Better Place Forests	
Contact Phone Number: (415) 629-7663	
A The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.  The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).  C Ministerial Project involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.  D Statutory Exemption other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).	
EX Categorical Exemption	
Specify type: Class 3 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures	
F. Reasons why the project is exempt:	
Construct an accessory structure (appurtenant) to a new use.	
In addition, none of the conditions described in Section 15300.2 apply to this project.	
Date:	
Elizabeth Cramblet, Project Planner	

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#### **Development Permit Findings**

1. That the proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood or the general public, and will not result in inefficient or wasteful use of energy, and will not be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

This finding can be made, in that the project is located in an area where the proposed use is allowed and is not encumbered by physical constraints to development. Construction will comply with prevailing building technology, the California Building Code, and the County Building ordinance to ensure the optimum in safety and the conservation of energy and resources.

2. That the proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will be consistent with all pertinent County ordinances and the purpose of the zone district in which the site is located.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed location of the non-habitable structure and commercial recreational use and the conditions under which they would be operated or maintained will be consistent with all pertinent County ordinances and the purpose of the TP (Timber Production) and SU (Special Use) zone districts as the primary use of the property will be a memorial site with one 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure that meets all current site standards for the zone districts.

SCCC 13.10.692 Organized camps and conference centers: The purpose of the special use regulations for organized camps and conference centers are

- (1) To foster the commercial use of the scenic and recreational values in the County, while the County benefits from the preservation of scenic elements, revenue from the visitors of the camps, and assistance in fire protection.
- (2) To maximize preservation of the environment and the amenities of a site by allowing flexible development procedures while controlling density, access, and impacts on neighboring properties.

The proposed use will give visitors an opportunity to access scenic parts of the Santa Cruz mountains typically unavailable to them in a controlled, supervised environment.

The applicant will utilize active timber management and periodic harvesting to restore and enhance timber stands towards an old growth type ecosystem, reduce ground fuel to mitigate fire risk, manage the eradication of non-native species, and maintain existing harvest infrastructure.

3. That the proposed use is consistent with all elements of the County General Plan and with any specific plan which has been adopted for the area.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed use is consistent with the use and density requirements specified for the R-M (Mountain Residential) land use designation in the County General Plan. A Rural Density Matrix Determination was obtained from the County to establish

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a maximum allowable number of day-use visitors to the site annually which came to 10,950. The applicant anticipates limited weekday visitation with most of the visits to occur over the weekend, approximately 20 to 30 visitors each day, which will comply with the number of user days authorized by the Rural Density Matrix. Appointments will be required prior to visiting the site which allows the applicant to control the number of people coming each day.

A specific plan has not been adopted for this portion of the County.

4. That the proposed use will not overload utilities, and will not generate more than the acceptable level of traffic on the streets in the vicinity.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed site with the proposed use will have a limited number of patrons visiting each day. Since most of the visitors will primarily visit with their families given the nature of the business, it is anticipated that most of them will carpool with at least two people per vehicle. This has been the case at their other locations like Point Arena, California. Currently, the applicant requires customers to book their visits in advance to ensure there will be a forest steward there to guide them. The expected level of traffic generated by the proposed project will vary day to day and by seasons. This is a rural road with very little travel except residents that live off of Buzzard Lagoon Road and Eureka Canyon Road. It will not adversely impact existing roads or intersections in the surrounding area. Most of the trips will likely occur over the weekend rather than the weekday which is during off-peak times.

5. That the proposed project will complement and harmonize with the existing and proposed land uses in the vicinity and will be compatible with the physical design aspects, land use intensities, and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood.

This finding can be made, in that the project site is surrounded by a parcels with varying uses including a youth camp, timber production sites, vacant, undeveloped property, and one single-family homes. The proposal includes a non-habitable accessory structure consisting of a bathroom and storage room. No single-family dwellings are included in the proposal. The proposed structure is located in an area previously disturbed by past timber harvests. Soils and biotic reports were reviewed to ensure compatibility with the existing environment. The applicant has indicated he will utilize active forest management methods, including periodic timber harvesting to restore and enhance timber stands towards an old growth type ecosystem, reduce ground fuel to mitigate fire risk, and manage the eradication of non-native species.

6. The proposed development project is consistent with the Design Standards and Guidelines (sections 13.11.070 through 13.11.076), and any other applicable requirements of this chapter.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed non-habitable structure will be of an appropriate scale, constructed with metal shingles, metal panels and wood siding with earth tone colors that will blend with the surrounding natural area.

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

#### **Conditions of Approval**

Exhibit D: Project plans, prepared by Fletcher Studio, Landscape Architect, dated 4/5/2019.

- I. This permit authorizes the construction of a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure as indicated on the approved Exhibit "D" for this permit. This approval does not confer legal status on any existing structure(s) or existing use(s) on the subject property that are not specifically authorized by this permit. Prior to exercising any rights granted by this permit including, without limitation, any construction or site disturbance, the applicant/owner shall:
  - A. Sign, date, and return to the Planning Department one copy of the approval to indicate acceptance and agreement with the conditions thereof.
  - B. Obtain a Building Permit from the Santa Cruz County Building Official.
    - 1. Any outstanding balance due to the Planning Department must be paid prior to making a Building Permit application. Applications for Building Permits will not be accepted or processed while there is an outstanding balance due.
  - C. Obtain a Grading Permit from the Santa Cruz County Building Official.
  - D. Obtain an Encroachment Permit from the Department of Public Works for all off-site work performed in the County road right-of-way.
- II. Prior to issuance of a Building Permit the applicant/owner shall:
  - A. Submit final architectural plans for review and approval by the Planning Department. The final plans shall be in substantial compliance with the plans marked Exhibit "D" on file with the Planning Department. Any changes from the approved Exhibit "D" for this development permit on the plans submitted for the Building Permit must be clearly called out and labeled by standard architectural methods to indicate such changes. Any changes that are not properly called out and labeled will not be authorized by any Building Permit that is issued for the proposed development. The final plans shall include the following additional information:
    - 1. A copy of the text of these conditions of approval incorporated into the full size sheets of the architectural plan set.
    - 2. One elevation shall indicate materials and colors as they were approved by this Discretionary Application. If specific materials and colors have not been approved with this Discretionary Application, in addition to showing the materials and colors on the elevation, the applicant shall supply a color and material sheet in 8 1/2" x 11" format for Planning Department review and approval.
    - 3. Grading, drainage, and erosion control plans.

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

4. Details showing compliance with fire department requirements. If the proposed structure(s) are located within the State Responsibility Area (SRA) the requirements of the Wildland-Urban Interface code (WUI), California Building Code Chapter 7A, shall apply.

- B. Meet all requirements of and pay Zone drainage fees to the County Department of Public Works, Stormwater Management. Drainage fees will be assessed on the net increase in impervious area. Please read the following added conditions of approval:
  - Based on the updated plans where the limit of roadway/driveway 1. improvements have been significantly reduced, this project may be considered a medium or large project per County of Santa Cruz Requirements. Please note that reference to the San Francisco Bay Areas Municipal Regional Permit and its stormwater regulations (C3) is not relevant for this project. Please see Part 3 Section C.1 for thresholds for mitigation and description of impervious surfaces (see the 1stand 2nd footnotes). Please provide an accounting of the existing and proposed impervious and semi pervious areas (roof, paving, gravel, pavers, etc.) on the site (in the project scope areas) to determine whether this is a large or medium project. This information shall be used to determine which areas shall be considered in the mitigation design (see page 51 of the CDC). The accounting on C2.0 is not adequate in that it doesn't account for additional and redeveloped compacted base rock areas (these areas should be considered as 50% impervious; similarly, paver areas may also be considered 50% impervious). Please clarify if the base rock road will be oil and screened - in which case these areas shall be considered completely impervious unless additional technical information is provided demonstrating otherwise. Full analysis demonstrating compliance with the CDC may be delayed until building permit application stage at the applicants' risk, however enough detail and supporting analysis/narrative description must be provided to describe proposed design and mitigations and to demonstrate feasibility prior to discretionary completeness.
  - 2. Provide a final stormwater management analysis/report that demonstrates compliance with the County Design Criteria including parts C.2 (Source Control Measures), C.3.a (Stormwater Discharge Rates and Volumes), C.3.b. (Pollutants of Concerns) and C.3.c. (Site Design and Runoff Reduction).
  - 3. Provide final stormwater management improvement plans consistent with the analysis/reports, other project plans, and which are detailed adequately for construction. The final plans should include details on how all proposed impervious and pervious areas will be routed. Show methods and locations of bench drain outfalls, grades and runoff paths for paver areas and parking areas, details and finished grades and surfacing for the drainage channel repair, and methods and locations of erosion control/dissipation of driveway runoff. If the final design includes mitigations that rely on infiltration of

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

stormwater, please include additional notes on the grading plan to avoid/minimize disturbance of infiltration areas and/or provide for decompaction/cleaning/testing of infiltration areas after grading is complete. The construction scheduling should be designed so that infiltration areas are not compacted nor clogged during construction.

- 4. Since the site received upstream runoff from adjacent properties the project shall provide an easement(s) or other recorded document(s) acknowledging that the site does and will continue to receive upstream runoff, that the property owners responsible for maintenance of the pathway, and that the County and Flood Control District is not responsible for the upstream runoff or for maintenance of the drainage pathway. See Section G.3 of Part 3 of the CDC.
- 5. Provide final approval letter from the geotechnical engineer approving of the drainage plans, the design infiltration rate used in stormwater BMP sizing, and approving of the location of any/all infiltrative BMPs, outfall facilities, and the channel repair work.
- 6. Final civil plans shall be coordinated with final stormwater management analysis, landscape, architectural and other site plans.
- 7. Recorded maintenance agreement(s) for stormwater management and mitigation facilities will be required. Include detailed management activities, maintenance requirements, schedule, signs of system failure, and responsible party both in the recorded maintenance agreement. See the CDC SWM-25A and B for examples. If the project is considered large from a stormwater management perspective, SWM-25B shall be used and the agreement shall include the attachments required (site/watershed map and detailed maintenance and inspection checklist) as described in the CDC. The inspection checklist shall specify specific field observations and testing methodologies for infiltration consistent with 2<sup>nd</sup> Nature's BMP RAM Technical Document V4.1, CASQA Handbooks, or other document source.
- 8. All inlets shall be marked "No Dumping Drains to Bay" or equivalent and shall be maintained by the property owner.
- 9. Zone 7A fees will be assessed on the net increase in permitted impervious area due to the project. This project may be eligible for fee credits for existing impervious areas if documentation is presented demonstrating existing impervious areas are permitted or were built prior to 2005.
- A. Obtain an Environmental Health Clearance for this project from the County Department of Environmental Health Services. Following are added conditions of approval:
  - 1. Prior to the Building Permit Application phase, the applicant must apply for and obtain an approved Small Water System Permit. A sewage disposal

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

system application must be submitted and approved, with fees, system design, 100% expansion area and show setback from water system. Refer to previous comments for people to contact with questions.

- B. Meet all requirements of the Environmental Planning section of the Planning Department. Following are added conditions of approval:
  - 1. If archaeological resources or human remains are accidentally discovered during construction, work shall be halted within 50 feet of the find until int can be evaluated by a qualified professional archaeologist. If the find is determined to be significant, appropriate mitigation measures shall be formulated and implemented with the concurrence of the lead agency (Ref: Health & Safety Code Section 7050.5; Santa Cruz County Code 16.40). A professional archaeologist shall be onsite for monitoring purposes during rough grading operations.
  - 2. If human remains are found at any time, work must be stopped and the County Coroner must be notified immediately. If the Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission will be notified as required by law. The Commission will designate a Most Likely Descendant (MLD) who will be authorized to provide recommendations for management of the remains and any associated materials (Ref: California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98; and Health & Safety Code Section 7050.5; and Santa Cruz County Code 16.40).
  - 3. Historic resource "BPFI" shall be protected and preserved in place. The capping of this location shall be completed under the observation of a professional archaeologist.
  - 4. A "Less Than 3 Acre Timber Conversion Permit" shall be completed and approved prior to building permit issuance.
  - 5. All biotic conditions listed in the "Biotic Approval Letter" (dated 4/8/19) shall be followed.
  - 6. The non-habitable accessory structure shall contain a bathroom and storage only. This building may not be insulated or finished with sheet rock.
- C. Meet all requirements and pay any applicable plan check fee to Cal Fire.
- D. Submit 3 copies of plan review letters prepared and stamped by the project Geotechnical Engineer.
- E. Pay the current Affordable Housing Impact Fee. The fees are based on new square footage and the current fee for non-residential construction is \$3 per square foot.
- F. Provide required off-street parking for 15 cars. Parking spaces must be 8.5 feet wide

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

by 18 feet long and must be located entirely outside vehicular rights-of way. Parking must be clearly designated on the plot plan.

- G. Submit a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the school district in which the project is located confirming payment in full of all applicable developer fees and other requirements lawfully imposed by the school district.
- H. Complete and record a Declaration of Restriction to construct a 495 square foot non-habitable accessory structure. You may not alter the wording of this declaration. Follow the instructions to record and return the form to the Planning Department.
- II. All construction shall be performed according to the approved plans for the Building Permit. Prior to final building inspection, the applicant/owner must meet the following conditions:
  - A. All site improvements shown on the final approved Building Permit plans shall be installed.
  - B. All inspections required by the building permit shall be completed to the satisfaction of the County Building Official.
  - C. The project must comply with all recommendations of the approved soils reports.
  - D. Pursuant to Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.080 of the County Code, if at any time during site preparation, excavation, or other ground disturbance associated with this development, any artifact or other evidence of an historic archaeological resource or a Native American cultural site is discovered, the responsible persons shall immediately cease and desist from all further site excavation and notify the Sheriff-Coroner if the discovery contains human remains, or the Planning Director if the discovery contains no human remains. The procedures established in Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.080, shall be observed.

#### III. Operational Conditions

- A. While Buzzard Lagoon Road is a County maintained road, it is only minimally maintained. The owner(s) are responsible for maintaining Buzzard Lagoon Road in a safe and operable condition for access to and from the subject parcel and to repair the road as needed to facilitate access. This includes the stretch of Buzzard Lagoon Road from where it intersects Highland Way and Eureka Canyon Road to the subject parcel (APN 106-291-16).
- B. Please include visible signage for the Emergency Vehicle Turnout that says "NO PARKING AT ANY TIME" or similar language. Parking is not permitted in this area at any time. If applicable, utilize red paint to indicate this as well.
- C. The number of cars allowed onsite at any given time shall not exceed 15 which is the number of required parking stalls for this site.

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- D. The number of guests visiting at any given time shall not exceed 30 and shall only occur during daylight hours.
- E. Visitation shall be by appointment only. No unscheduled drop-ins shall be allowed.
- F. There shall be no amplified music at any time.
- G. Applicant shall obtain any state and/or federal permits for their use as required.
- H. In the event that future County inspections of the subject property disclose noncompliance with any Conditions of this approval or any violation of the County Code, the owner shall pay to the County the full cost of such County inspections, including any follow-up inspections and/or necessary enforcement actions, up to and including permit revocation.
- IV. As a condition of this development approval, the holder of this development approval ("Development Approval Holder"), is required to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the COUNTY, its officers, employees, and agents, from and against any claim (including attorneys' fees), against the COUNTY, it officers, employees, and agents to attack, set aside, void, or annul this development approval of the COUNTY or any subsequent amendment of this development approval which is requested by the Development Approval Holder.
  - A. COUNTY shall promptly notify the Development Approval Holder of any claim, action, or proceeding against which the COUNTY seeks to be defended, indemnified, or held harmless. COUNTY shall cooperate fully in such defense. If COUNTY fails to notify the Development Approval Holder within sixty (60) days of any such claim, action, or proceeding, or fails to cooperate fully in the defense thereof, the Development Approval Holder shall not thereafter be responsible to defend, indemnify, or hold harmless the COUNTY if such failure to notify or cooperate was significantly prejudicial to the Development Approval Holder.
  - B. Nothing contained herein shall prohibit the COUNTY from participating in the defense of any claim, action, or proceeding if both of the following occur:
    - 1. COUNTY bears its own attorney's fees and costs; and
    - 2. COUNTY defends the action in good faith.
  - C. <u>Settlement</u>. The Development Approval Holder shall not be required to pay or perform any settlement unless such Development Approval Holder has approved the settlement. When representing the County, the Development Approval Holder shall not enter into any stipulation or settlement modifying or affecting the interpretation or validity of any of the terms or conditions of the development approval without the prior written consent of the County.
  - D. <u>Successors Bound</u>. "Development Approval Holder" shall include the applicant and the successor'(s) in interest, transferee(s), and assign(s) of the applicant.

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

Minor variations to this permit which do not affect the overall concept or density may be approved by the Planning Director at the request of the applicant or staff in accordance with Chapter 18.10 of the County Code.

Please note: This permit expires three years from the effective date listed below unless a building permit (or permits) is obtained for the primary structure described in the development permit (does not include demolition, temporary power pole or other site preparation permits, or accessory structures unless these are the primary subject of the development permit). Failure to exercise the building permit and to complete all of the construction under the building permit, resulting in the expiration of the building permit, will void the development permit, unless there are special circumstances as determined by the Planning Director.

	Jocelyn Drake Deputy Zoning Administrator
Expiration Date:	
Effective Date:	
Approval Date:	

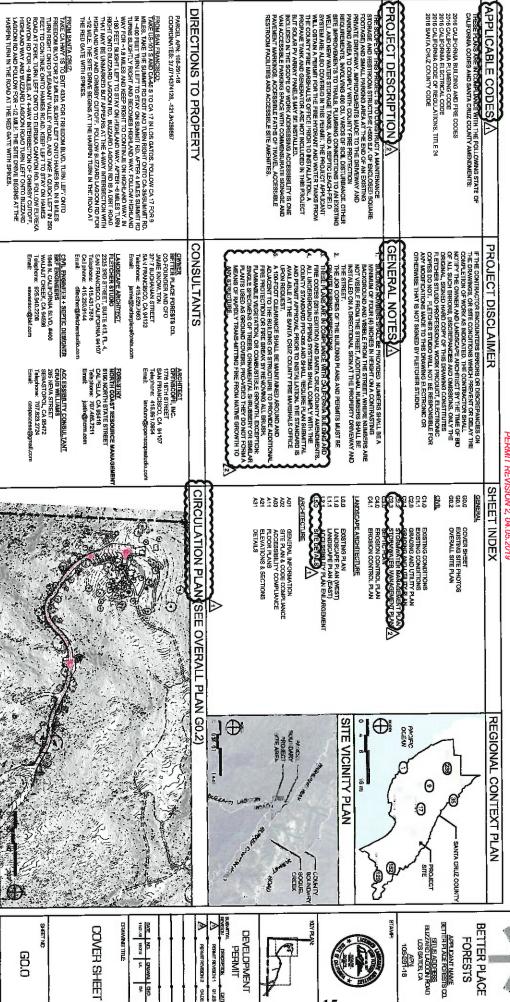
Appeals: Any property owner, or other person aggrieved, or any other person whose interests are adversely affected by any act or determination of the Zoning Administrator, may appeal the act or determination to the Planning Commission in accordance with chapter 18.10 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

# TER PLACE FORESTS

**BUZZARD LAGOON ROAD** LOS GATOS, CA 95468

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT SUBMITTAL PARCEL APN: 106-291-16 11.01.2018

REVISED: PERMIT REVISION 1, 01.29.2019
PERMIT REVISION 2, 04.05.2019







BETTER PLACE FORESTS

APN 106-291-16







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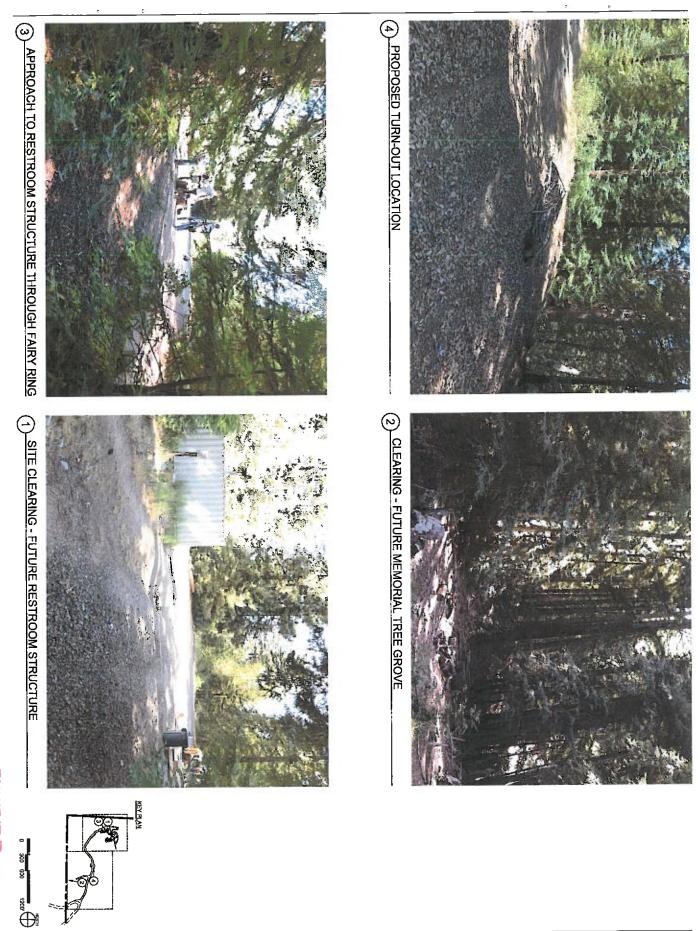


EXHIBIT D

EXISTING SITE PHOTOS

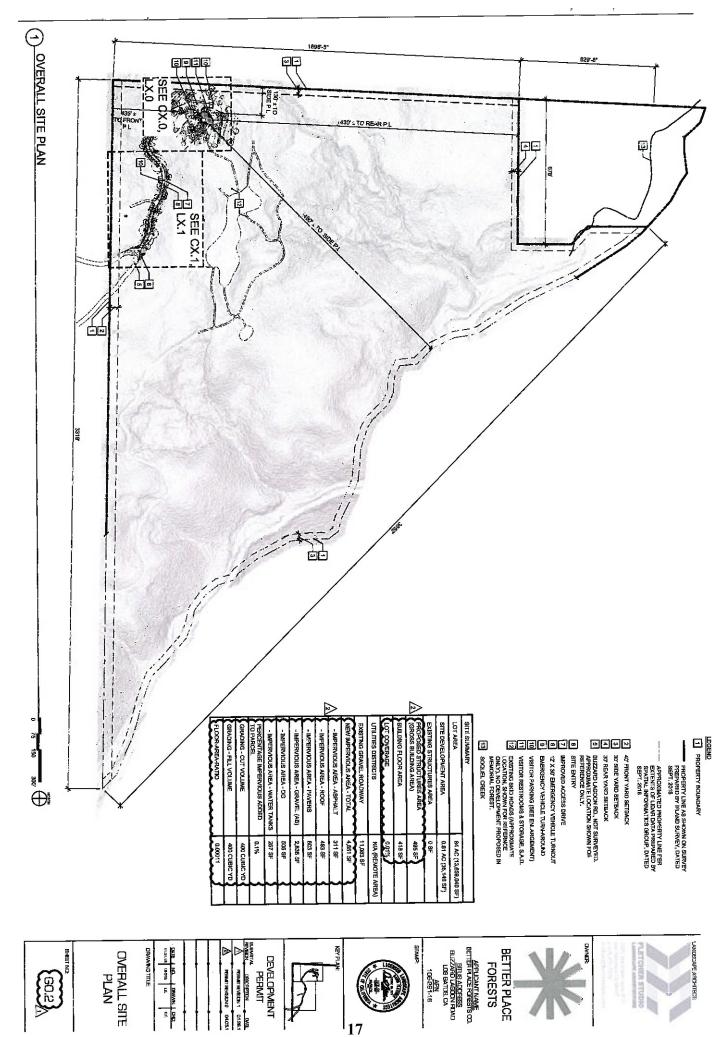
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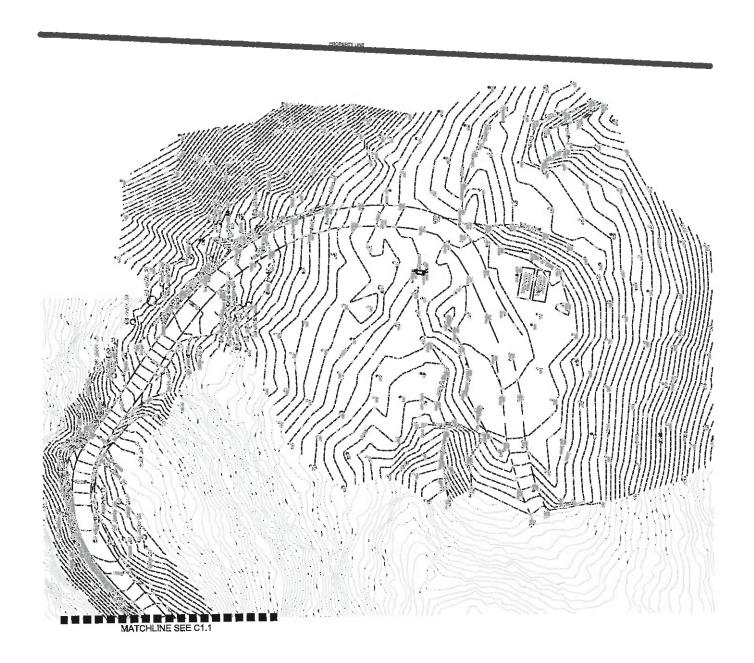
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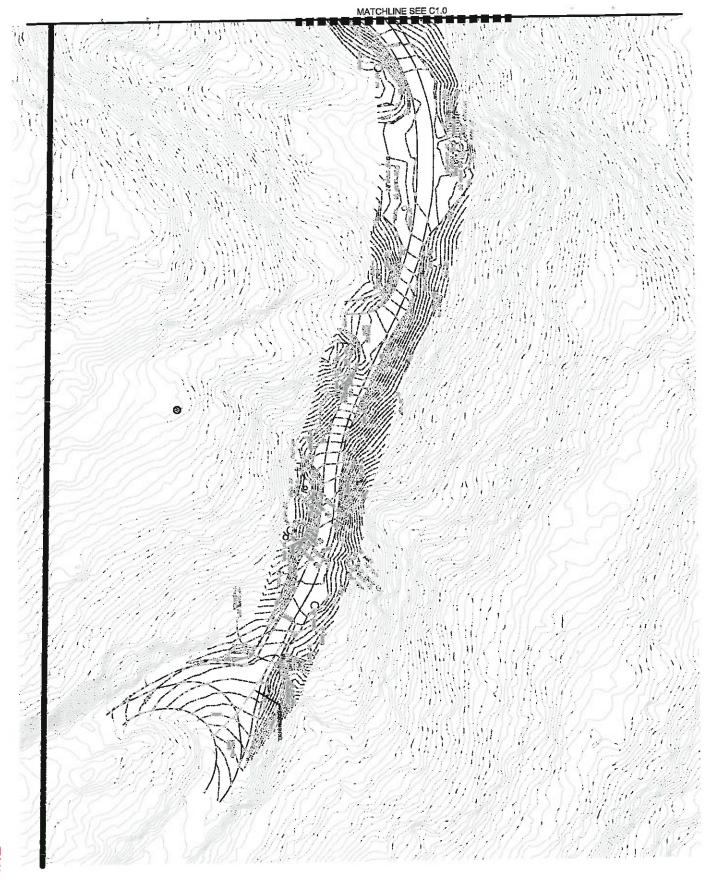


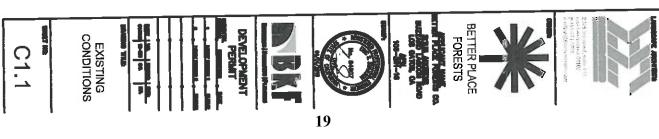
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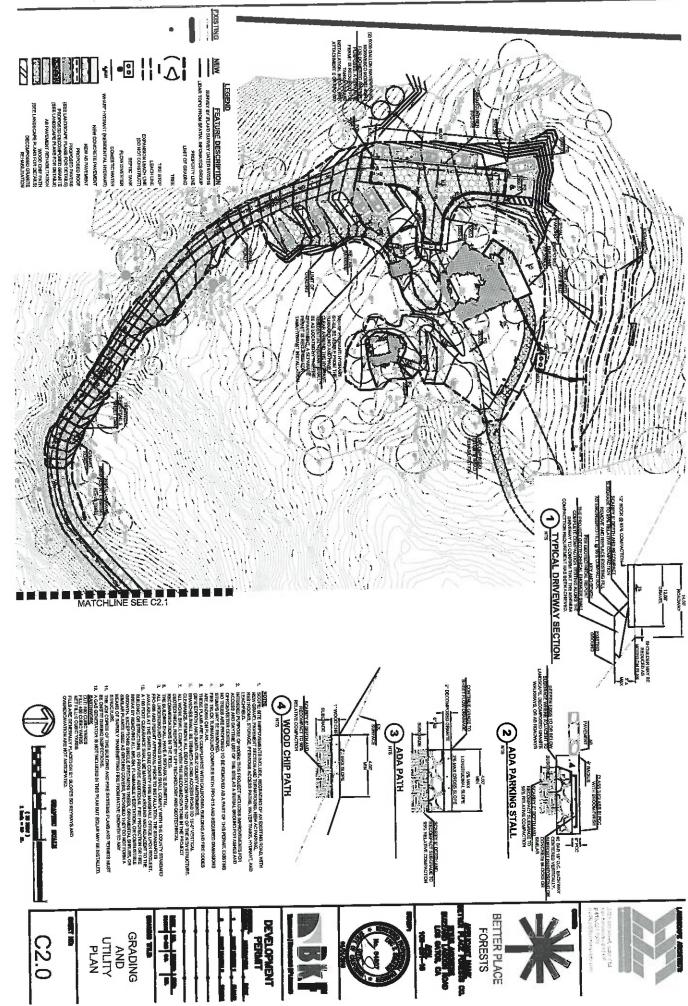


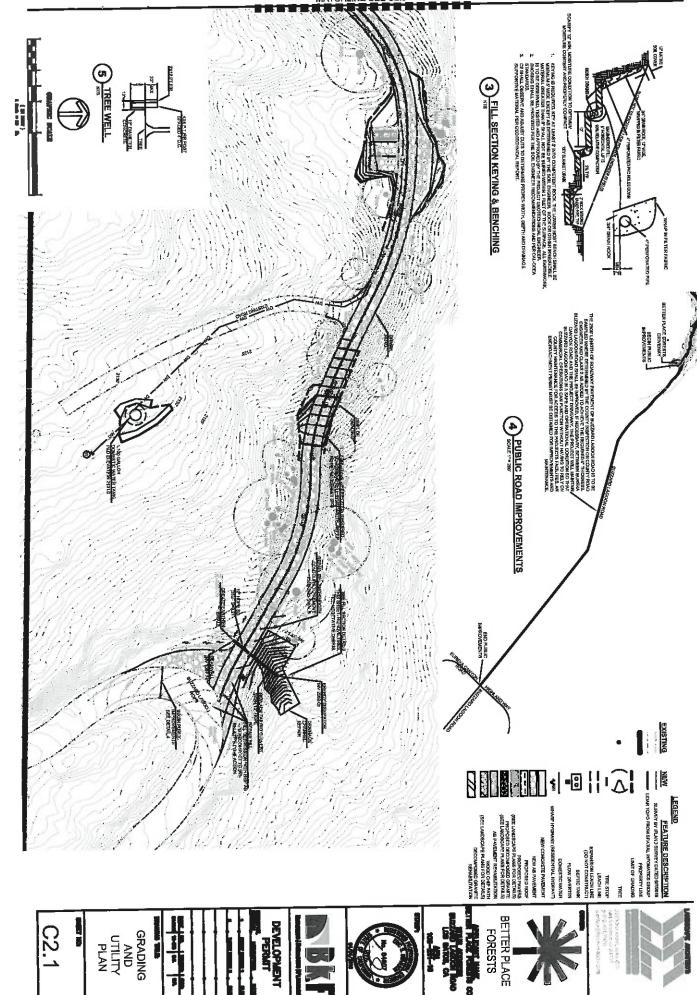


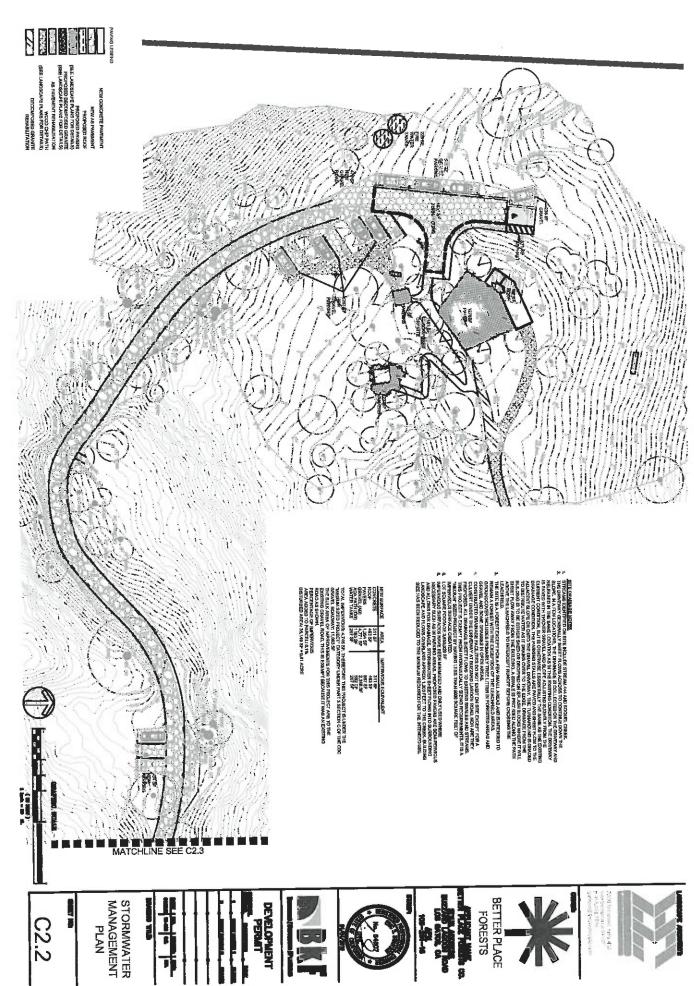
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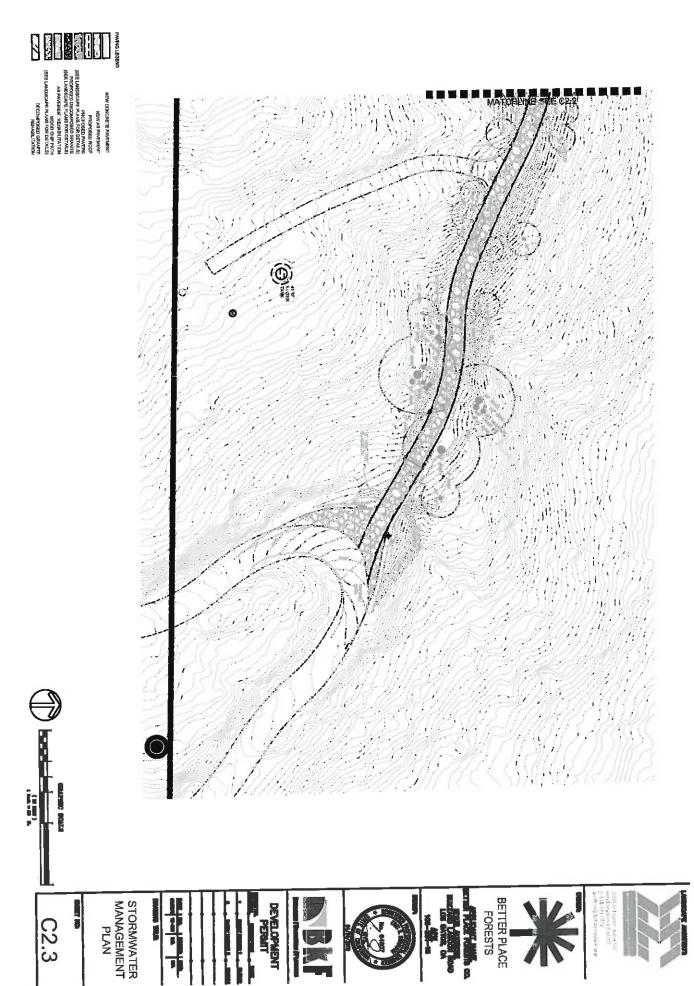


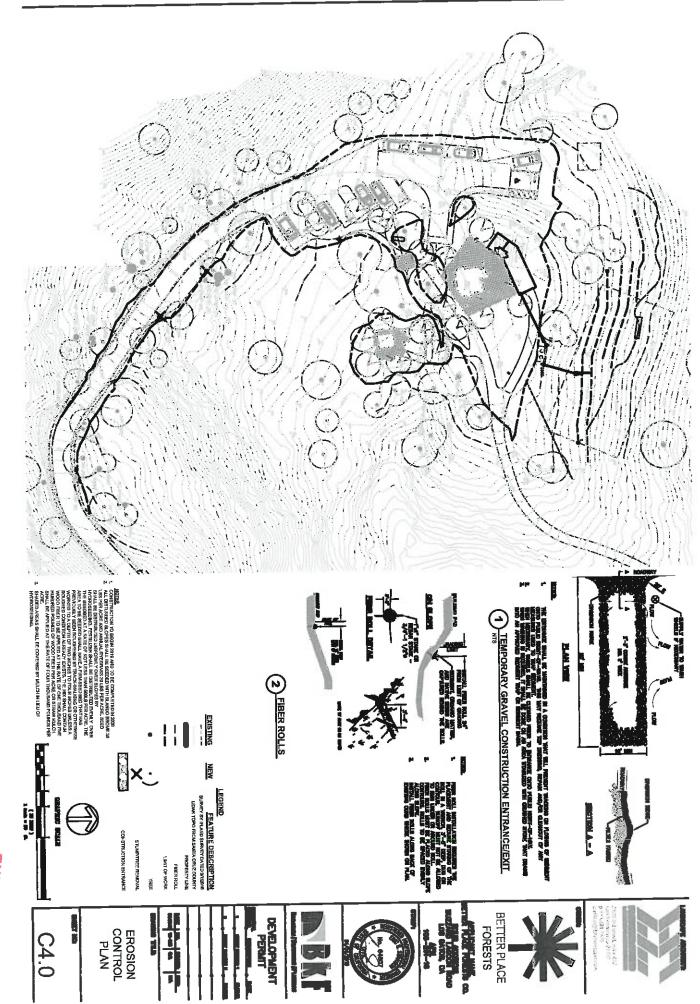




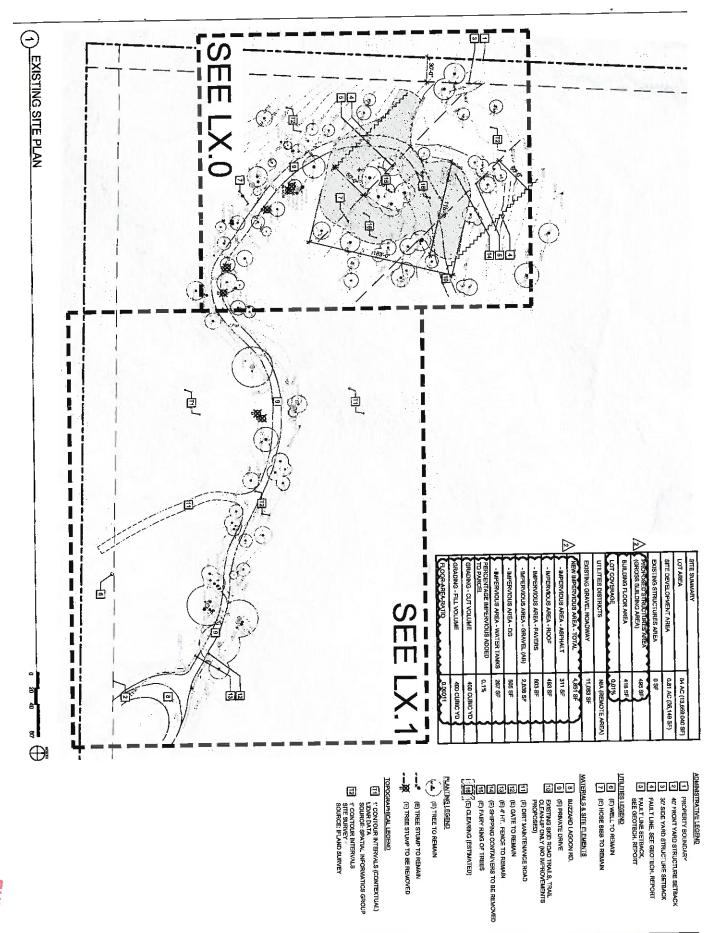












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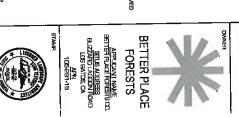
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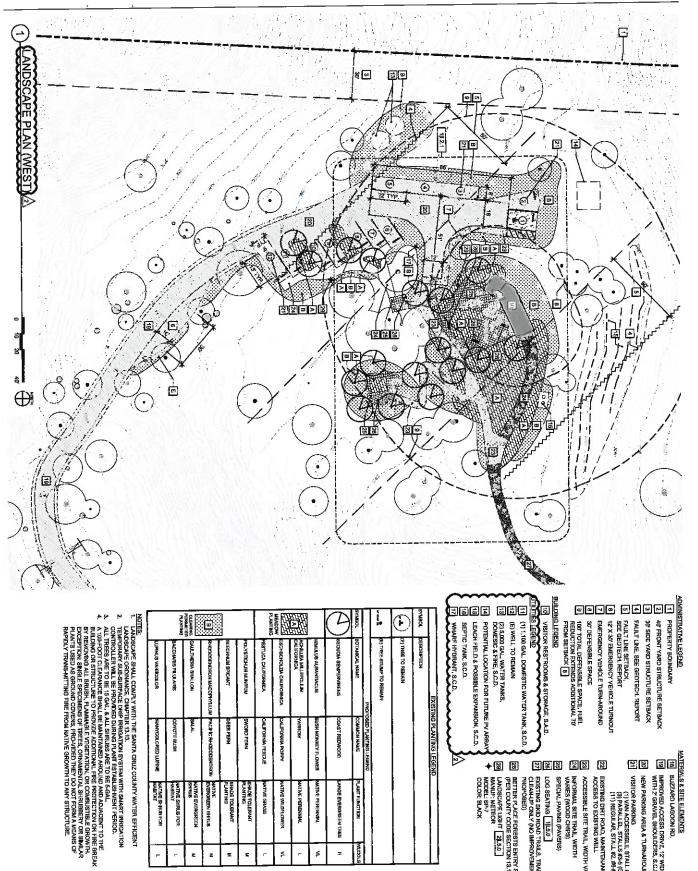
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DRAWING TITLE

EXISTING PLAN







IMPROVED ACCESS DRIVE, 12' WIDE WITH 2' GRAVEL SHOULDERS, S.C.D. NEW PARKING AREA & TURNAROUND (GRAVEL)

28 **+** 2 27 28 25 VISITOR PARKING
(1) YAN ACCESSIBLE, STALL #1 (CONC.)
(2) PARALLEL, STALLS #3-5 (GRAVEL)
(11) REGULAR, STALL #2, #6-#14 (GRAVEL)

EXISTING DIRT ROAD, MAINTENANCE ACCESS TO EXISTING WELL

ACCESSIBLE SITE TRAIL, WIDTH VARIES (DG)
INFORMAL SITE TRAIL, WIDTH
VARIES (WOOD CHIPS)
SPECIAL PAVING (PAVERS)

BETTER PLACE FORESTS ENTRY SION
(PER COUNTY CODE SECTION 13:10.561)

[ANDSCAPE LIGHT [31.5.5]

MANUF: METERR

MODEL: 187-7

COLOR: BLACK LOG SEATING TIL5.0

EXISTING SKID ROAD TRAILS, TRAIL
CLEANLY ONLY (NO IMPROVEMENTS

BETTER PLACE FORESTS

APPLICANT NAME BETTER PLACE FORESTS CO.

STUS ADDRESS BUZZARO LAGOON ROAD LOS BATOS, CA

APN 108-291-16



ROS EVERGREEN TREE

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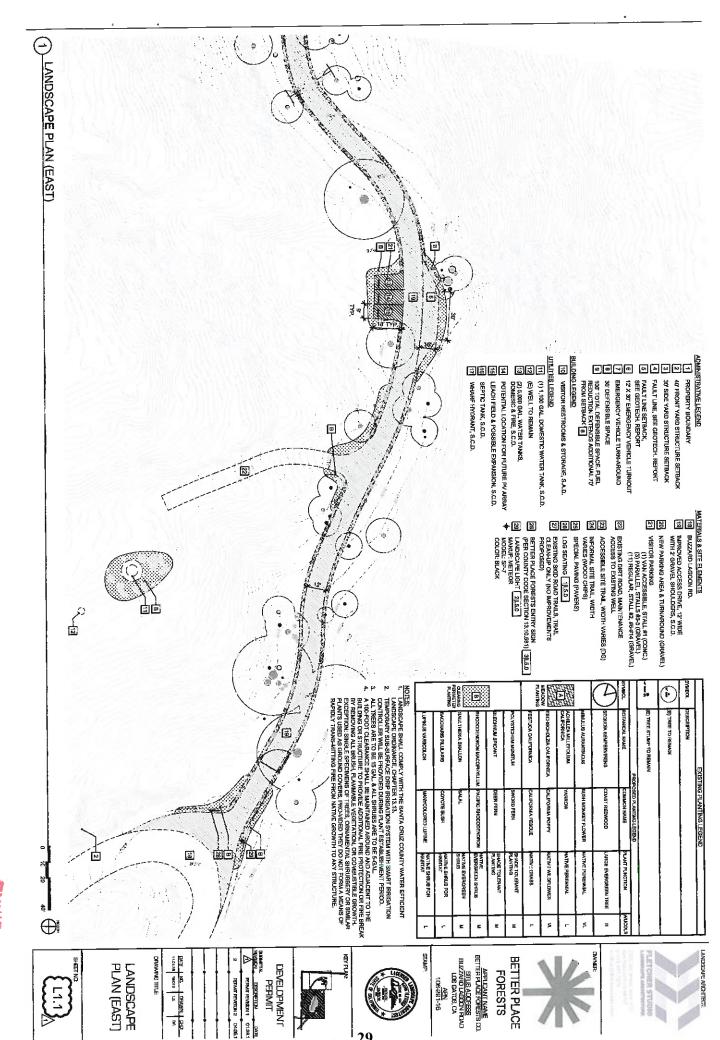
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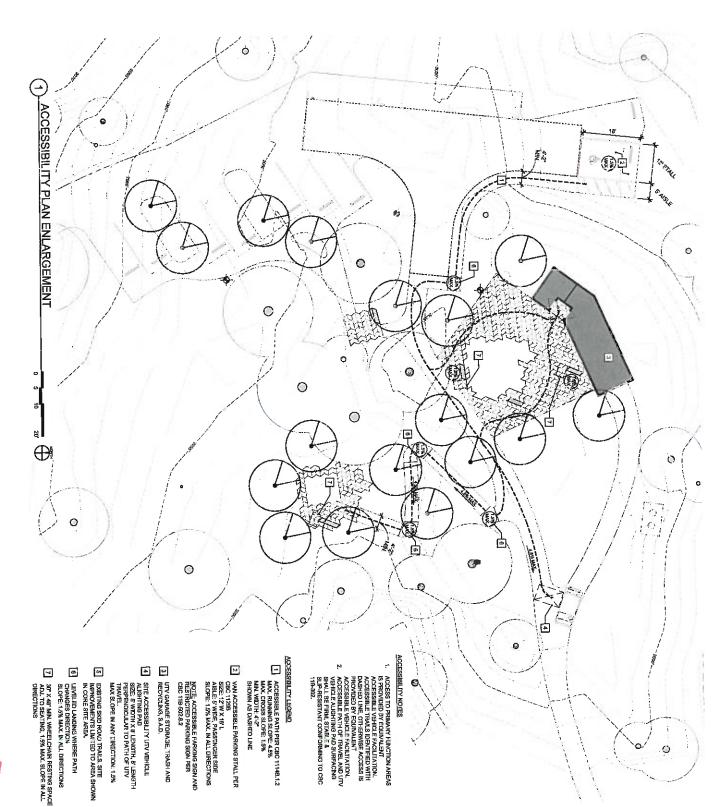
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PLAN (WEST LANDSCAPE

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SITUS ADDRESS BUZZARD LAGOON ROAD LOS GATOS, CA APN 105-291-18

APPLICANT NAME BETTER PLACE FORESTS CO.

BETTER PLACE

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DEVELOPMENT

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

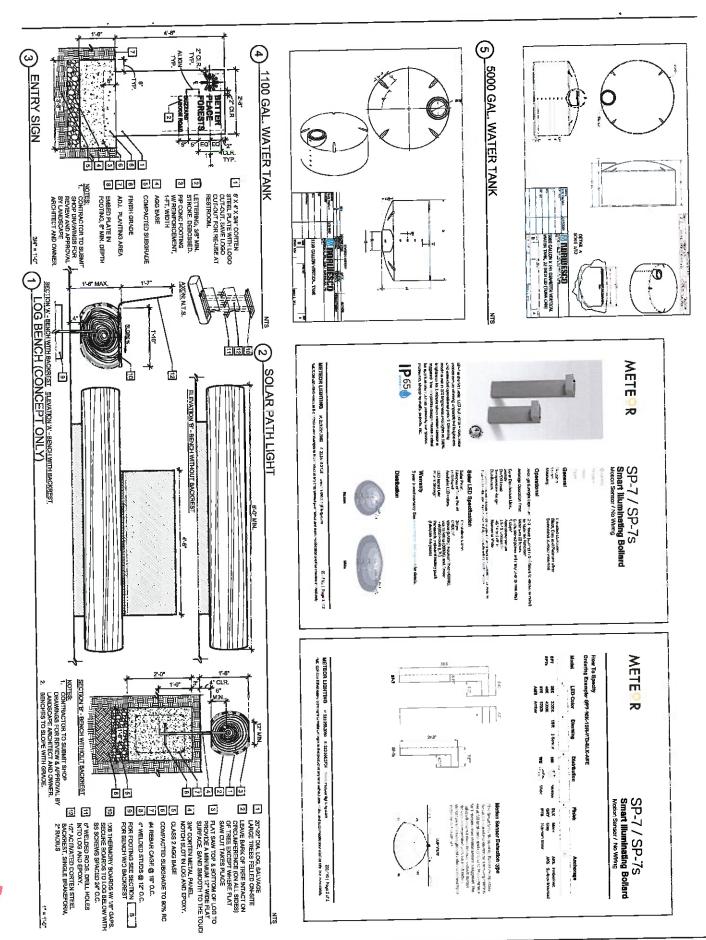
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APPLICANT NAME BETTER PLACE FORESTS CO.

SITUS ADORESS BUZZARD LAISDON ROAD LOS GATES, CA

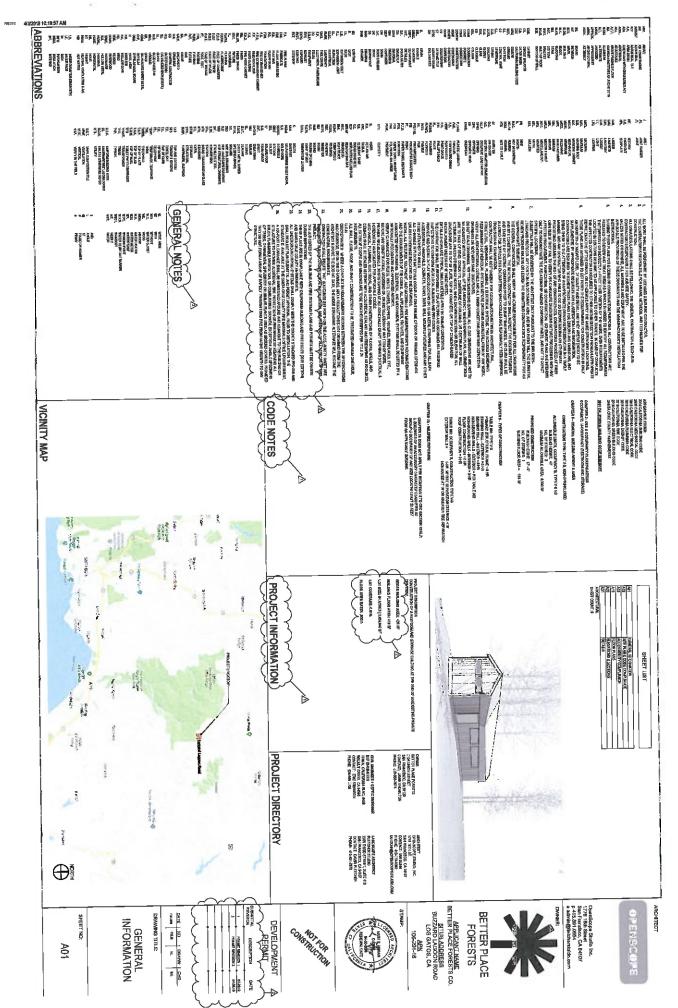
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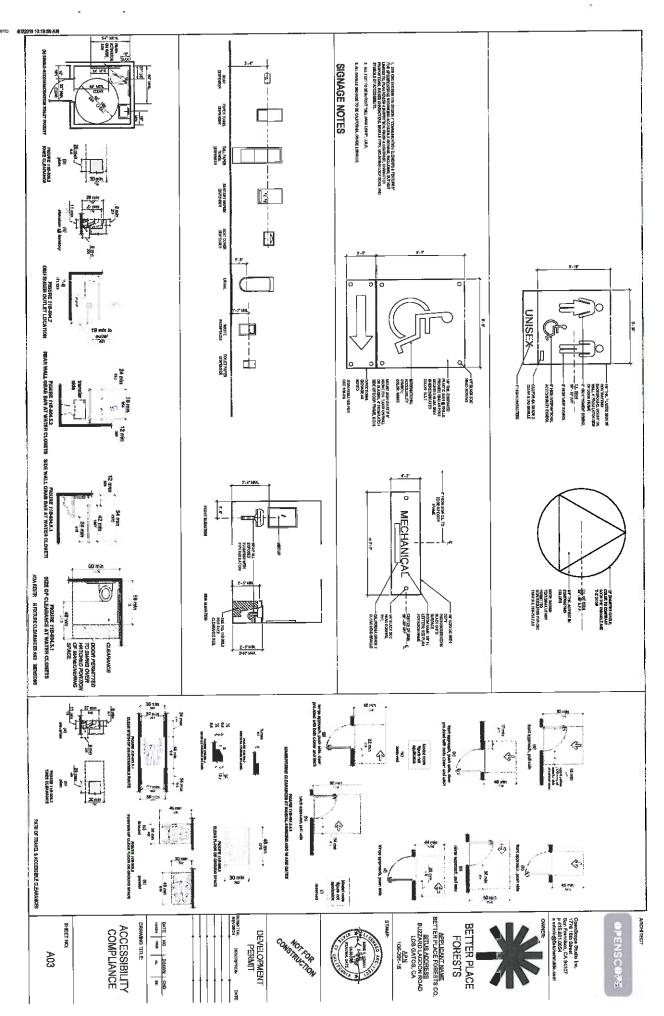
BETTER PLACE

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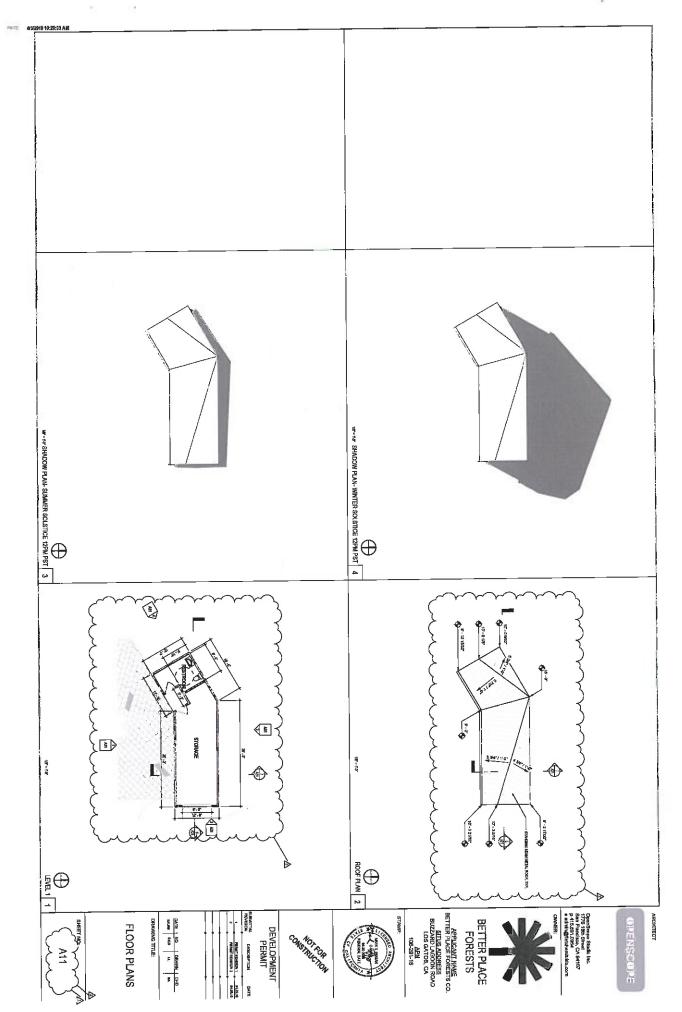
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

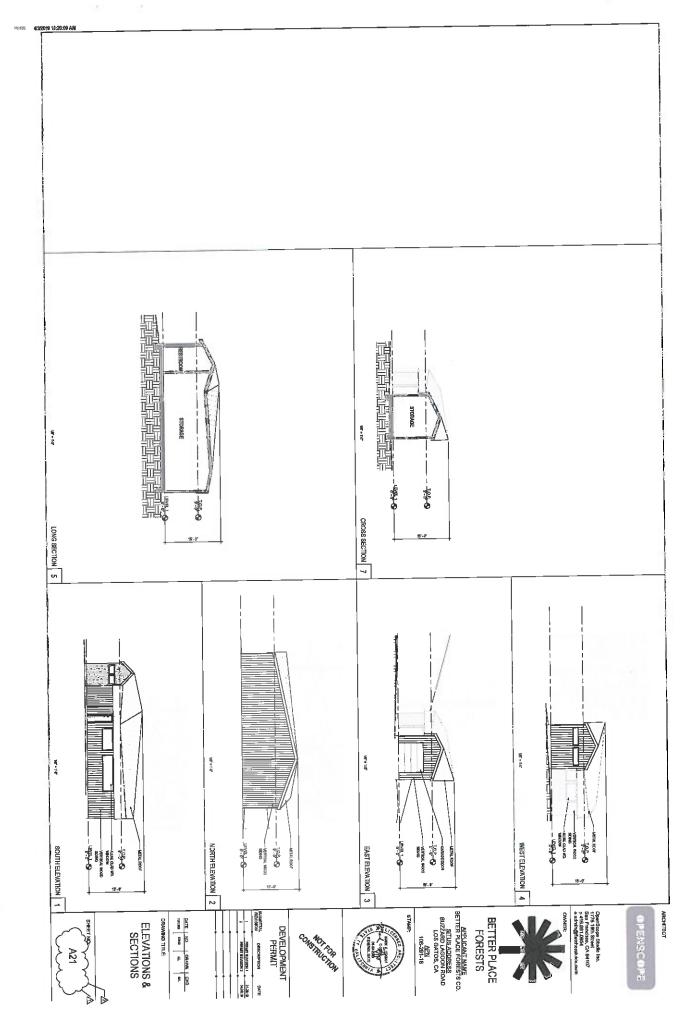


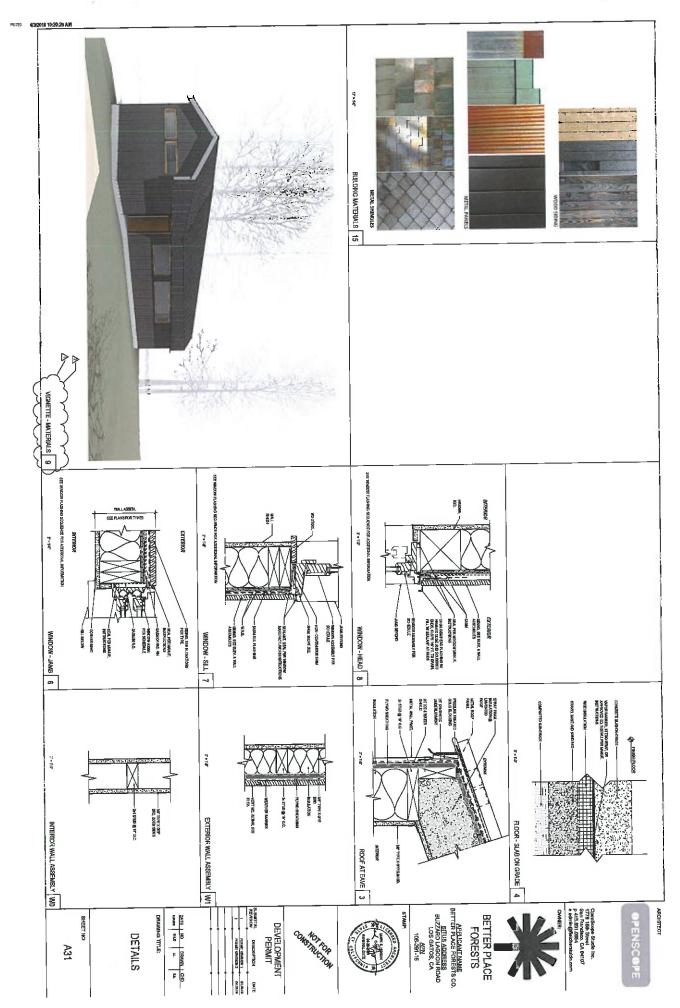


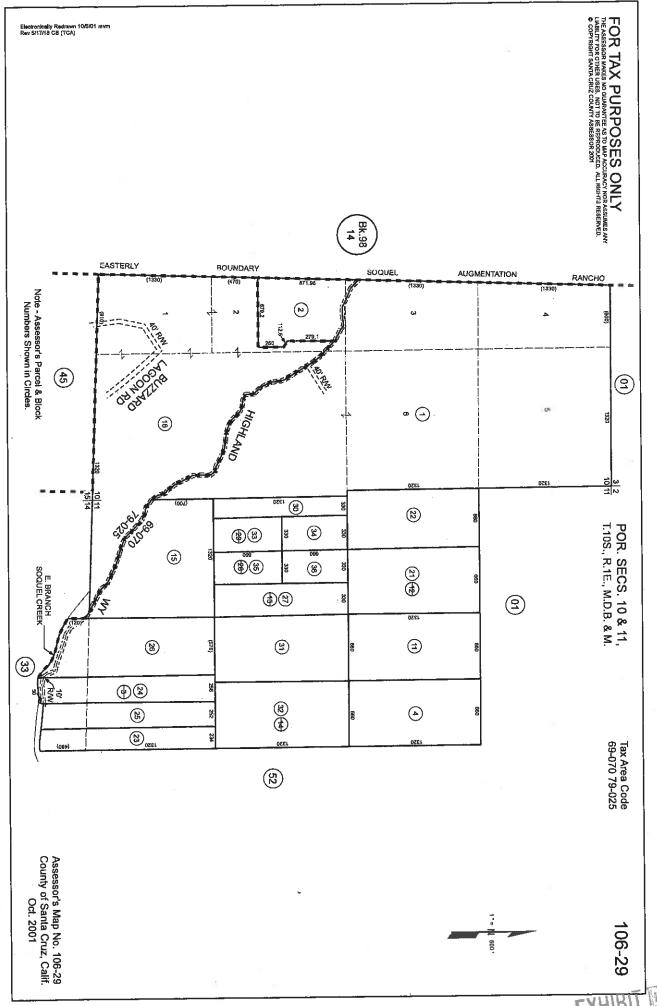


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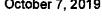






### Parcel Location Map (106-291-16)

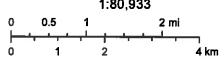




Street Labels

State Highways

— Major Roads



County of Santa Cruz

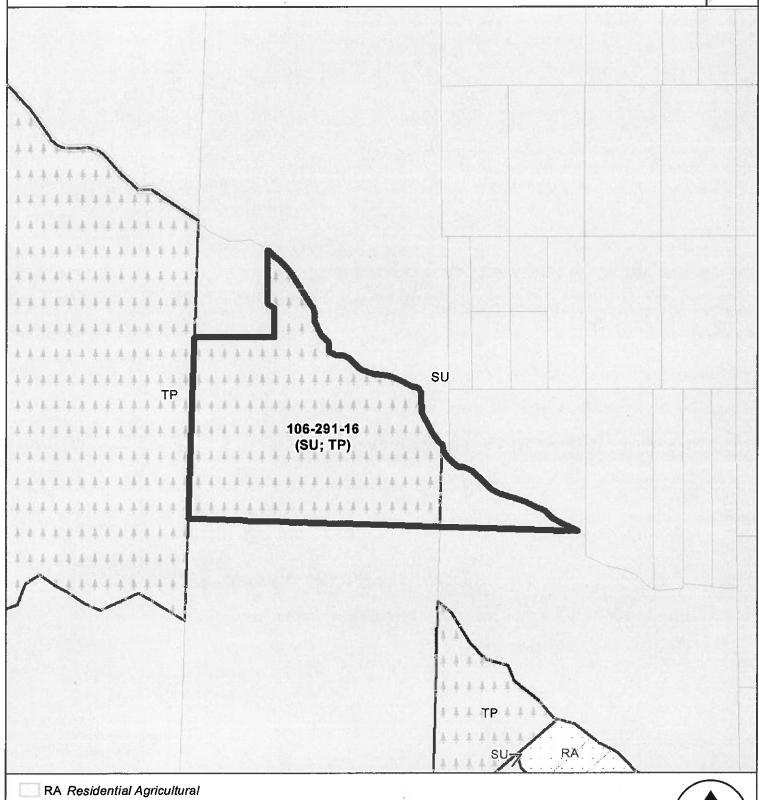




### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## **Parcel Zoning Map**

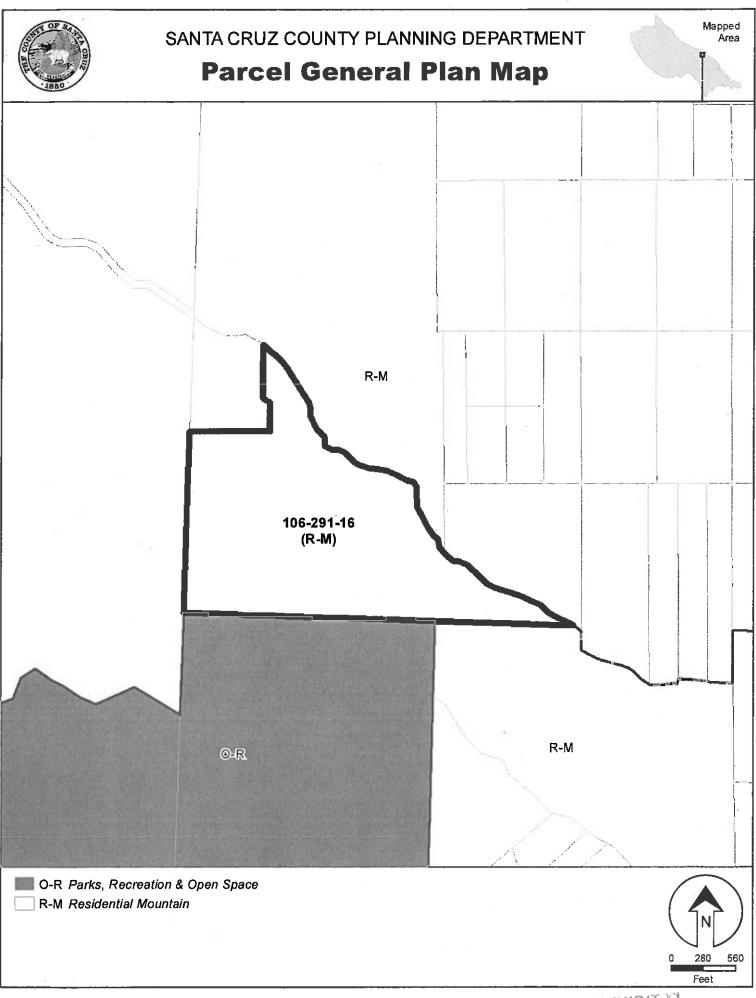




SU Special Use

TP Timber Production





Application #: 181556 APN: 106-291-16

Owner: BPF Santa Cruz Conservation Lands LLC

### **Parcel Information**

#### **Services Information**

Urban/Rural Services Line:

\_ Inside

X Outside

Water Supply: Sewage Disposal: Well Septic

Fire District:

Cal Fire

Drainage District:

Zone 7

### **Parcel Information**

Parcel Size:

Approximately 84 acres

Existing Land Use - Parcel:

Undeveloped

Existing Land Use - Surrounding:

Youth camp to the north, undeveloped and some

residential east, state of California owned land south, TP

owned land for timber production

Project Access:

Buzzard Lagoon Road

Planning Area:

Summit

Land Use Designation:

R-M (Mountain Residential)

Zone District:

TP (Timber Production) & SU (Special Use)

Coastal Zone:

\_\_ Inside

X Outside

Appealable to Calif. Coastal

Yes

X No

Comm.

Technical Reviews: Archaeologic & Biotic Reviews

Geologic Hazards:

State & County fault zone, landslide

Fire Hazard:

Not a mapped constraint

Slopes:

15-50%

Env. Sen. Habitat:

No physical evidence on site where proposed development

Grading:

Minimal grading proposed for the access road

Tree Removal:

No trees proposed to be removed

Scenic:

Not a mapped resource

Archeology:

Not mapped/no physical evidence on site



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

#### PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

September 9, 2019

Jamie Knowlton, Owners Agent Better Place Forests 3717 Buchanan Street Ste. 400 San Francisco, CA 94123

Subject:

Review of Limited Geotechnical and Geologic Study and Fault Evaluation, Proposed Residential Development, Jensen Property, APN 106-291-16, Buzzard Lagoon Road, Santa Cruz County, California dated 11 December 2014 and Report Update – APN 106-291-16 dated 24 October 2018 by Upp

Geotechnology, Serial No. 18654

Project Site:

Buzzard Lagoon Road (no situs address)

APN: 106-291-16

Application No: REV181172

Dear Mr. Knowlton;

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Planning Department has accepted the technical conclusions of the geologic and geotechnical report you provided in support of your project. However, the report concludes that the landslide underlying the proposed bathroom and storage structure is likely to move 16 feet in the event of a major earthquake in the area. This displacement is, in our opinion, too large to mitigate for habitable structures. Consequently, we disagree with the report's design recommendations intended to permit development of habitable structures on the parcel.

The proposed project is a beneficial economic use of the property and it is clear from the scope of the project proposal that it is not the intention of the property owner to develop habitable structures as part of the project. The bathroom facility is a necessary component of the proposed use. It qualifies as a habitable structure under a strict reading of the definition of habitable structures in County Code section 16.10.040 (19), in that it will contain plumbing fixtures other than hose bibs. However, we are of the opinion that it does not meet the intention of the County Code definition in terms of defining risk levels associated with certain types of building use. We also note that the proposed low intensity development is a preferred use for a property that is located on a potentially active landslide in the heart of the San Andreas fault zone.

The proposed bathroom is required for public health and safety of those visiting this remote site and we therefore grant an exception for this project so that the bathroom/storage structure may be approved as a non-habitable building (SCCC16.10.100). In order to qualify for this exception, the storage area must conform to the rules for non-habitable structures. As such, it



Geologic and Geotechnical Report Review APN: 106-291-16

Sept. 9, 2019 Page 2 of 2

cannot be insulated or finished with sheet rock. A condition shall be included in the project use permit prohibiting future use of the proposed building as a habitable structure.

Additional comments may be forthcoming pending review of the information requested above.

Please note that this determination may be appealed within 14 calendar days of the date of service. Additional information regarding the appeals process may be found online at: http://www.sccoplanning.com/html/devrev/plnappeal\_bldg.htm

Please contact Jeff Nolan at (831) 454-3175/Jeffrey.Nolan@santacruzcounty.us or Rick Parks at (831) 454-3168/email: wiks@santacruzcounty.us if we can be of any further

assistance.

Sincerely,

Rick Parks, GE 2603

100

Civil Engineer

Planning Department County of Santa Cruz

**G** 2247

GINEERING

County Geologist Planning Department County of Santa Cruz

Cc:

Environmental Planning, Attn: Jessica deGrassi

No. 2603

C2Earth, Attn Chris Hundemer, CEG, PE

Owner: Newell Jensen



### COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123 KATHLEEN MOLLOY, PLANNING DIRECTOR

April 8, 2019

Jamie Knowlton CFO Better Place Forest 3717 Buchanan Street, Suite 400 San Francisco, CA 94123

Subject: 106-29-116 Better Place Forest Biotic Assessment and Conditioned Biotic Approval

**APN**: 106-29-116

**Application:** REV181188; 181556

Dear Mr. Knowlton,

In December of 2018, County Environmental Planning Staff received a request for a Biotic Assessment for APN 106-29-116. During preliminary analysis it was noted that the approximately 84-acre parcel is in an area of biotic concern and sensitive habitats and protected plant and animal species have potential to occur on the parcel where a small development project is proposed. A Biotic Assessment was requested to determine if potential biotic concerns as defined by SCCC 16.30 and 16.32 constitute the need for additional analysis to ensure protection of sensitive habitat.

The project involves improvements to the existing driveway, installation of three paved parking areas, construction of a small bathroom facility, installation of bench seating, and landscaping. The future use of the parcel involves allowing public visitation and access to the existing trail systems on the parcel for the purposes of dedicating specific existing trees as memorials to deceased loved ones.

The project site was evaluated by Environmental Planning staff to identify if any potential habitat for special status species or other sensitive habitat may occur there. This evaluation involved review of existing resource information including a query of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB), recent and historic photographs and aerial imagery of the project site, review of the County's GIS database, and review of formerly compiled biological information from a 2014 Timber Harvest Plan prepared for the parcel and provided by the applicant. County Environmental Planning Staff visited the project site on March 13, 2019 with the County's consulting biologist Bill Davilla of Ecosystems West Consulting Group (Ecosystems West). Mr. Davilla's Biotic Assessment is included as Attachment A. It was determined based on the results of this evaluation, that the project footprint as depicted in the project plans does not support sensitive biological resources.



The parcel is located in characteristic redwood forest habitat surrounded primarily by additional redwood forest. The property is currently vacant with a gravel driveway that leads to a clearing where the majority of the development is proposed. The parcel was previously used for timber harvesting and the footprint of proposed development is located in areas heavily disturbed by former timber harvest staging and operations. A dense cluster of French broom (Genista monspessulanus) occurs in a portion of the surveyed area directly adjacent to proposed development activities.

Previous studies completed on the entire 84-acre parcel identified potential habitat for special status wildlife and plants, including State Candidate Threatened foothill yellow-legged frog (Rana boylii), and Federal listed California red-legged frog (Rana draytonii). CNPS list 1B.1 plant Santa Cruz manzanita (Arctostaphylos andersonii) is known to occur on the property. However, the proposed development activities are not located within the vicinity of habitat for these special-status species. No special status species were observed during field review.

The project site contains potential habitat for nesting birds. Birds of prey and migratory birds are protected under the California Fish and Game Code, and the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Under the MBTA, it is unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture, or kill" a migratory bird unless and except as permitted by regulations.

There are sensitive habitat constraints on the project site associated with habitat for nesting birds and invasive species that must be considered during project implementation.

To avoid impacts to nesting birds:

- If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment begins outside the February 1 to August 31 breeding season, there will be no need to conduct a preconstruction survey for active nests.
- Trees intended for removal shall be removed during the period of September 1<sup>st</sup> through January 31<sup>st</sup>, in order to avoid the nesting season.
- If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment is to commence between February 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>, a survey for active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within 15 days prior to the start of such activity. The survey area shall include the project area, and a survey radius around the project area of 50 feet for MBTA birds and 250 feet for birds of prey.
- If no active nest of a bird of prey or MBTA bird is found then no further avoidance and minimization measures are necessary.
- If active nest(s) of MBTA birds or birds of prey are found in the survey area, an avoidance buffer of 50 feet for MBTA birds and 250 feet for birds of prey shall be established around the active nest(s). The biologist shall monitor the nest, and advise the applicant when all young have fledged the nest. Removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment may begin after fledging is complete.
- If the biologist determines that a smaller avoidance buffer will provide adequate protection for nesting birds, a proposal for alternative avoidance/protective measures, potentially including a smaller avoidance buffer and construction monitoring, may be submitted to environmental planning staff for review and approval prior to removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment.



• If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment stops for more than two weeks during the nesting season (February 1<sup>st</sup> - August 31<sup>st</sup>) a new survey shall be conducted prior to re-commencement of construction.

To control the spread of invasive species:

• An invasive plant removal and control program shall be implemented that targets removal and control of French broom (*Genista monspessulanus*).

By incorporating these conditions, the project will result in no significant impacts to sensitive habitat or species and will improve the habitat features present on this parcel. A copy of this biotic approval has been provided to the Resource Planner and Project Planner for incorporation into the outstanding permit applications.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me by email or telephone at <u>Juliette.Robinson@santacruzcounty.us</u> or 831-454-3156.

Sincerely,

Juliette Robinson

Resource Planner IV, Biologist

CC: William Davilla, EcoSystems West Robert Loveland, Area Resource Planner Elizabeth Cramblet, Project Planner accompanied by three members of the BPF team. During or field visit we observed a short dirt-aggerate rocked access road from the intersection of Buzzard Lagoon Road north to a small disturbed open flat with scattered trees and annual grass glades where the proposed parking area and bathroom/storage building will be located along with seating, contemplation and picnic areas. The dominant habitat surrounding the access road and improvement areas is characterized as coast redwood forest and mixed evergreen forest. The dominant tree species is coast redwood (Sequoia sempervirens). Other prominent tree associates include Douglas fir (Psuedotsuga menziesii), tan oak (Lithocarpus densiflorus), madrone (Arbutus menziesii) and coast live oak (Quercus agrifolia). The understory reflects a moderate dense second growth forest stands with little shrub or herbaceous understory and dense wood litter. In the proposed improvement area, the most prominent sub-shrub was California hazelnut (Corylus californica). Other associates include western sword fern (Polystichum munitum) and redwood sorrel (Oxalis oregana). Areas used for skid landing timber storage were inhabited by non-native grasses (not identifiable at the time of the survey). Due to these flats being near the base of the forested slope, they tended to be wetter than the closed forest floor primarily due to runoff collecting at these points. There was a grassy glade with some scattered rush plants (Juncus sp.) where the proposed parking area is planned. It did not appear that this glade was a jurisdictional wetland feature due to the appearance of the soils and lack of surface hydrology. Most of the area proposed for development is presently bare ground or dense wood litter.

No sensitive plant or animal species indigenous near the site were observed on the parcel during the time of our survey. The habitats on the parcel and soil-types are not indicators for sensitive plant or animal species known to occur near the parcel or in this area of the Santa Cruz mountains, such as Santa Cruz mountains manzanita (*Arctostaphylos andersonii*). No chaparral habitat was observed within or immediately adjacent to the proposed facility improvement areas. Breeding birds were observed flying about the parcel, but no substantial stick nests were observed in the trees. The coast redwood tree and significant sized Douglas fir trees could provide habitat for nesting raptors. A dense, but small stand of French broom (*Genista monspessulanus*) occurs just above the proposed parking lot. It was recommended to BPF that this stand and any other stands not observed during this visit be removed from the site. If development should begin during the breeding season, we recommend a comprehensive breeding bird survey be conducted and if nesting birds are observed, then appropriate buffers be established based on California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommendations.

Based on this preliminary assessment, it is my professional opinion that those areas proposed for visitor facility development do not support sensitive biological resources or habitats that would be impacted by the proposed project.

Should you require further information or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Bill Davilla Principal



April 4, 2019

Juliette Robinson, Environmental Coordinator Planning Department County of Santa Cruz 701 Ocean Street Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Re: Biotic Assessment of the Proposed Better Place Forest Buzzard Lagoon Property (REV 181188)

This letter reports the findings of a biotic assessment of Better Place Forests (BPF) property (Assessor's Parcel No. 106-291-16), located just north of Buzzard Lagoon Road approximately one-half mile north west from Eureka Canyon Road in northeastern Santa Cruz County, California. BPF is proposing to develop the 84-acre parcel into an outdoor recreational space for families to walk a forested trail network and to spread ashes of deceased relatives beneath existing trees on the parcel. BPF proposes to maintain the native forest through periodic timber harvesting with the intention of enhancing the timber stands toward an old growth ecosystem with an associated goal of increased biodiversity, reduction in fire hazard risk and the ultimate eradication of non-native species. Active management strategies will be designed to provide watershed and viewshed protection, wildlife habitat, timber and carbon sequestration. As part of this Timber Production Management program, BPF is requesting a zoning amendment to allow a use category "Organized camps and facilities for outdoor recreational, educational, religious activities" as described in Section 13.10.372(B) of the Santa Cruz County Code. One of the proposed uses for the parcel under this zoning would be to permit the spreading of cremated remains that would be mixed with the local soil of the forest floor around existing trees (primarily coast redwood trees in a designated area of the parcel. To facilitate visitor-use of the parcel and the deposition of the cremated remains, BPF is proposing several localized improvements including: minor driveway access improvements from Buzzard Lagoon Road; a parking area for 15 vehicles; and construction of a small (600 sq. ft.) non-habitable Group U occupancy bathroom and storage building with roof mounted solar panels with associated well, septic tank and associated leach field. All these improvements will be in areas previously disturbed during past timber harvests. The focus of this biotic assessment was within the proposed foot-print of these proposed site improvements and does not include the remainder of the property proposed for recreational hiking or future timber harvests.

The U.S. Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey of Santa Cruz County (1980) classifies the soil on the County's property as Lompico-Felton complex, 5-50 percent slopes. The Lompico-Felton complex is characterized as a moderately deep, well-drained soil formed residuum derived from sandstone, shale, silt-stone, schist or mudstone. Permeability of the Lompico-Felton complex is moderate to moderately slow with medium to rapid runoff potential and moderate or high erosion hazard potential. It supports on the BPF parcel coast redwood-mixed evergreen forest habitat.

Bill Davilla of EcoSystems West and Juliette Robinson of Santa Cruz County Planning Department conducted a field survey BPF Buzzard Lagoon property improvement sites March 13, 2019. We were

# BETTER PLACE FORESTS

Date: October 25, 2019

To: Santa Cruz County Planning Department

From: Better Place Forests

Re: Project Statement, Buzzard Lagoon Road (APN: 106-291-16)

Better Place Forests (BPF) is seeking to utilize an 84-acre property located on Buzzard Lagoon Road (APN 106-291-16) in Santa Cruz County for use as a conservation memorial forest. Our project objective is to preserve the property's open space and forest resources while providing the option of a natural resting place for the regional population of Santa Cruz County.

Through minor site improvements, BPF intends to facilitate visitation and access to the site for those choosing our services while improving overall forest health through active management. Our development plan includes a parking area for 15 cars (including accessible spaces), the construction of a 495 square foot storage room with a restroom facility, and improvements to the existing driveway to meet CalFire standards. Our project will require electric, well, and septic infrastructure, including roof-mounted solar panels. Existing skid roads will be utilized as trails throughout the forest. The developed area will be ADA-accessible. A small all-terrain vehicle will be used to transport those with limited mobility to various undeveloped areas of the forest to ensure an equitable experience for all of our customers.

The property will be open to visitors during daytime hours four to seven days per week, depending on seasonality. We expect to employ three to five full-time forest stewards from the local community to be present on the site during operating hours. Weekday visitation will be limited, while weekends may bring up to 20-30 visitors. Our patrons will visit the forest for multiple reasons, including tree selection, memorial ceremonies, and visiting trees dedicated to family and friends. Memorial ceremonies will be limited to immediate family and are not intended to function as large funeral gatherings. During memorial ceremonies, we will mix cremated remains with local soil at a ratio of 3:1 (soil:ash) to ensure ashes are not visually distinguishable in the mixture, nor will cause any adverse environmental impacts.

We plan to actively manage the forest through periodic timber harvesting to increase biodiversity, mitigate fire risk, and eradicate non-native species. Under our management, the land will continue to function ecologically, providing watershed and viewshed protection, wildlife habitat and passage, and carbon sequestration. All forest work will be guided by a Forest Management Plan authored by a licensed forester.

In the State of California, the spreading of cremated remains does not constitute, nor create, a cemetery. BPF was guided to submit our application under the allowable use category "Organized camps and facilities for outdoor recreational, educational, religious activities" in Timber Production zones. Our proposed use fits directly into this classification, as we conduct a supervised program which provides educational, spiritual, social, and recreational elements. Our project will also provide a meaningful economic benefit to the County. BPF will staff three to five full time forest stewards from the County and spend several million dollars on numerous local consultants and contractors for the design, construction, maintenance, and operations of the property. Our customers will also increase traffic to local businesses, especially those along Summit Road.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposal. We look forward to working with you to bring Better Place Forests to Santa Cruz County.

