



## Staff Report to the Zoning Administrator

Application Number: **231264**

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**Applicant:** Land Trust of Santa Cruz County  
**Owner:** Land Trust of Santa Cruz County  
**APN:** 052-081-34, -35, -37  
**Site Address:** 275 Lee Road, Watsonville

**Agenda Date:** February 21, 2025

**Agenda Item #:** 1

**Time:** After 9:00 a.m.

**Project Description:** Proposal to establish a community harvest program at the Watsonville Slough Farm, including parking area, restrooms, farmworker housing (4 RV pads), trails and boardwalks.

**Location:** Property located on the west side of Lee Road at 275 Lee Road in Watsonville.

**Permits Required:** Coastal Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit, Conditional Site Development Permit, Riparian Exception

**Supervisory District:** 2nd District (District Supervisor: Kim De Serpa)

### Staff Recommendation:

- Adopt the attached Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit A) per the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- Approval of Application 231264, based on the attached findings and conditions.

### Project Description & Setting

This application is a proposal to establish a community harvest program at the Watsonville Slough Farm (a Land Trust of Santa Cruz County property).

The subject property is located on the west side of Lee Road in the Watsonville area. The parcel is located outside of the Urban Services Line, within the coastal zone, and can be characterized as an agricultural area adjacent to wetlands. The property is comprised of three separate parcels (APNs 052-081-34, -35, -37) totaling approximately 490 acres. Of that land area, approximately 10 acres are developed or disturbed, with 243 acres of wetland and preserved areas, and 237 acres are actively used for farming purposes.

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is proposing to establish a community harvest program that would encourage the public to engage with the agricultural uses on the property and to learn more about farming, food production, and the natural environment.

A community harvest gateway (with a barn, educational/activity areas, and a 50 space parking

area) is proposed to be accessed from Lee Road in an area of existing disturbance, including an existing barn which is proposed to be replaced. A farm stand, group picnic areas, and two restroom buildings are proposed to support the community harvest activities. The proposal also includes a small farmworker housing development (considered as an agricultural use in the County General Plan) consisting of four RV/trailer pads in two separate locations that were previously occupied by farmworker housing units that have since been removed from the property.

Walking trails are also proposed to allow visitors to view the agricultural operations and experience the wildlife on the property and the surrounding wetland areas. The trails are proposed in the vicinity of the community harvest gateway and around the edges of the wetland areas, including interpretative signage and boardwalks for access and viewing opportunities.

A Coastal Development Permit is required because the project involves new building area and uses located within the coastal zone.

A Conditional Use Permit is required for the following project elements:

- Small Farmworker Housing project (1 - 4 units) within the coastal zone
- Agri-tourism and Education (more than 12 events/year or 100 guests)
- Recreational uses (unpaved trails)

A Conditional Site Development Permit is required for the following project elements:

- Agricultural support facilities over 12,000 square feet in ground area
- Small Farmworker Housing (in coastal zone)
- Structures and facilities associated with parks and outdoor recreation uses

A Riparian Exception is required because elements of the proposal (portions of walking trails and viewing platforms) are proposed within riparian and buffer areas.

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

The subject property is approximately 490 acres, located in the CA (Commercial Agriculture) zone district, a designation which allows agricultural uses. The proposed community harvest gateway is ancillary to the principal permitted agricultural production use within the zone district and the CA zoning is consistent with the site's A (Agriculture) General Plan designation.

### **Community Harvest Gateway**

The community harvest barn would include a combination of agricultural support facility, educational facility, and administrative offices and the improvements would be located within an existing improved/disturbed area of the property. Educational and agri-tourism activities and events, as well as recreational uses (such as trails and interpretative signage), are allowed on CA zoned lands, per the recent code update.

The intent and design of the proposed community harvest gateway, ancillary facilities, and walking/wildlife viewing trails will provide an opportunity for members of the local community to participate in local agriculture and to have access to quality food, educational experiences, and enjoyment of open space on the property. The primary proposed community harvest (consumer harvest) use is allowed as a principal permitted use on CA zoned property. The remaining proposed

uses are allowed on CA zoned properties with a use permit, including elements of educational/agri-tourism events and recreational trails.

Benefits from this project include the provision of a location for the community to participate in educational experiences related to agricultural land uses along with opportunities to connect people to both agriculture and the natural environment at the same location. Additional details, describing the proposed community harvest use of the property can be found in the Land Trust's program statement for the property (Exhibit I).

### **Riparian Exception and Biotic Resources**

A Riparian Exception is required because elements of the proposal (portions of walking trails and viewing platforms) are proposed within riparian and buffer areas. These trails will also be linked to educational opportunities and areas for viewing wildlife. A biotic report was prepared by the project applicant and has been accepted by Environmental Planning staff. Recommended conditions have been incorporated to ensure protection of biotic resources and to mitigate any potential impacts of the proposed project.

The community harvest gateway would also provide a location for the public to be educated about natural resources and have an opportunity to view wildlife locally. These opportunities would result in increased awareness of the value of biotic resources and natural systems among the general public.

### **Design Review & Scenic Resources**

The proposed improvements comply with the requirements of the County Design Review Ordinance, in that the proposed project will be designed to blend with the existing agricultural landscape in the surrounding area.

The subject property is also located within the viewshed of the Highway 1 scenic corridor. Existing topography will largely obstruct views of the proposed structures and improvements from Highway 1 and the structures will be designed as agricultural support facilities that blend with the surrounding pattern of development and the natural landscape.

### **Local Coastal Program Consistency**

The proposed community harvest gateway is in conformance with the County's certified Local Coastal Program, in that the proposed use and the location of the proposed improvements will be compatible with the existing ongoing agricultural operations on the subject property. Additionally, the proposed project will involve community outreach and education that will assist in protecting natural resources and preserving agricultural production in the surrounding region. The project site is not located between the shoreline and the first public road and is not identified as a priority acquisition site in the County's Local Coastal Program. Consequently, the proposed project will not interfere with public access to the beach, ocean, or other nearby body of water.

### **Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission Review**

The Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission (APAC) reviewed the community harvest gateway

and recreational trails proposal for this site at a noticed public hearing on August 15, 2024 and recommended approval of this application to the Zoning Administrator (Exhibit G).

The APAC review considered that the principal permitted use of the property will continue to be agricultural production, which does not require a discretionary approval. Community harvest uses (identified as "consumer harvesting" in County Code) are allowed as permitted uses within the CA zone district and would be limited to select areas of the property and would not conflict with the ongoing agricultural production on the site. Furthermore, the proposed farmworker housing is considered an agricultural use pursuant to the County Code, implementing the State Agricultural Employee Housing Act, and supports continued agricultural production operations on site.

The proposed community harvest gateway and associated improvements would be ancillary to the principal commercial agricultural use of the subject property. The existing farming operations on the subject property would not be adversely affected by the proposed uses. All intensive human activity elements (community harvest barn, parking area, picnic areas, and farmworker housing RV pads) would be located over 200 feet from surrounding agricultural resource designated parcels. The community harvest proposal is designed to provide additional awareness and education to the local community regarding agriculture and natural resource management, which will provide an added benefit to support agricultural production in the region.

The proposed trail system would be located within the interior of the property and along the edges of the wetland areas, which provide an extensive natural buffer for agricultural operations on surrounding parcels.

For the above listed reasons, the proposed project will not impact agricultural operations on surrounding properties.

## **Environmental Review**

Environmental review has been performed for the proposed project per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project was reviewed by the County's Environmental Coordinator on October 16, 2024. A preliminary determination to issue a Negative Declaration with Mitigations (Exhibit A) was made on November 7, 2024. The mandatory public comment period expired on December 7, 2024, with comments received from CalTrans and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Exhibit I).

The environmental review process focused on the potential impacts of the project in the area of biotic resources. The environmental review process generated mitigation measures that will reduce potential impacts from the proposed development and adequately address these issues.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed community harvest gateway and recreational trail improvements would allow access to view agricultural and natural areas, educational experiences regarding agricultural production and natural resource preservation for the surrounding community, and provide additional recreational opportunities within the region in tandem. The creation and maintenance of an educational and agricultural community center and recreational trail system on the Watsonville Slough Farm property is consistent with the following goals of the County Strategic Plan:

- Outdoor Experience (Ensure access to and enhance experience in parks, open spaces, water areas and outdoor activities)
- Natural Resources (Protect and restore natural resources, including water, air, forests, coastline and agricultural lands)
- Health Equity (Promote a safe and healthy community that nurtures body and mind across all ages and social conditions)

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**

- Adopt the attached Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit A) per the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- **APPROVAL** of Application Number **231264**, based on the attached findings and conditions.

**Supplementary reports and information referred to in this report are on file and available for viewing at the Santa Cruz County Planning Division, 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: [www.sccoplanning.com](http://www.sccoplanning.com)**

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### **Exhibits**

- A. Mitigated Negative Declaration (CEQA determination)
- B. Findings
- C. Conditions
- D. Project plans
- E. Parcel Information
- F. Assessor's, Location, Zoning and General Plan Maps
- G. Staff Report to the Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission - 8/15/24 Hearing
- H. Initial Study
- I. Comments & Correspondence



## County of Santa Cruz

### Department of Community Development and Infrastructure

701 Ocean Street, Fourth Floor, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
 Planning (831) 454-2580 Public Works (831) 454-2160  
<https://cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov/>

### MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

**Project: Watsonville Slough Farm Community Harvest Project**  
**34, 052-081-35, 052-081-37**

**APN(S): 052-081-**

**Application #:231264**

#### **Project Description:**

The proposed project would result in structural and site improvements to support operation of the proposed Community Harvest Program at the Watsonville Slough Farm that is owned and managed by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust). The Program calls for opening up areas on the Farm to local families and other visitors so they can harvest fruits and vegetables for their own consumption while learning about healthy food and sustainable agricultural practices. A reconstructed barn, new restrooms, picnic areas, parking improvements, trails and a number of other minor improvements are proposed to support the Program. In addition, the Project includes development of four agricultural worker residential units.

#### **Project Location:**

The proposed project is located at 275 Lee Road on the west side of Lee Road and Highway 1 within the southern portion of unincorporated southern Santa Cruz County; see Figure 1. Santa Cruz County is bounded on the north by San Mateo County, on the south by Monterey and San Benito counties, on the east by Santa Clara County, and on the south and west by the Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The project site is bounded by Lee Road on the east, Harkins Slough Road on the north and agricultural and rural lands on the west and south.

**Owner: Land Trust of Santa Cruz County**

**Applicant: Land Trust of Santa**

**Staff Planner: Randall Adams**

**Email: [Randall.adams@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:Randall.adams@santacruzcountyca.gov)**

**This project will be considered**

#### California Environmental Quality Act Mitigated Negative Declaration Findings:

Find, that this Mitigated Negative Declaration reflects the decision-making body's independent judgment and analysis, and; that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information contained in this Mitigated Negative Declaration and the comments received during the public review period; and, that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the project applicant would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur; and, on the basis of the whole record before the decision-making body (including this Mitigated Negative Declaration) that there is no substantial evidence

that the project as revised will have a significant effect on the environment. The expected environmental impacts of the project are documented in the attached Initial Study on file with the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department located at 701 Ocean Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Santa Cruz, California. A digital copy of the document can be reviewed at the following web address:  
<http://www.sccoplanning.com/PlanningHome/Environmental/CEQAInitialStudiesEIRs/CEQADocumentsOpenforPublicReview.aspx>

Review Period Ends: 12/07/2024

*Note: This Document is considered Draft until it is Adopted by the Appropriate County of Santa Cruz Decision-Making Body*

Date: 11/7/2024

DocuSigned by:

Matt Johnston

MATT JOHNSTON, Environmental  
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## County of Santa Cruz

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## MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM for Application No. 231264

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
<b>BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>					
<b>BIO-1</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Pre-construction Surveys.</i> Prior to commencement of any vegetation removal (including clearing and grubbing), a qualified biologist shall survey the project disturbance area to identify the presence of any special-status species.	Applicant	Include measure as project Condition of Approval (COA). Survey to be submitted to County Planning Department.	Prior to site disturbance
<b>BIO-2</b>	Impacts to special status species and sensitive habitats.	<i>Areas to Be Protected During Construction.</i> Prior to initiation of construction activities, a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist shall identify areas to be protected with exclusion fencing and all areas requiring monitoring a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist. Prior to commencement of construction, high visibility exclusion fencing and/or flagging shall be installed with the assistance of a qualified biologist to indicate the limits of work and prevent inadvertent grading or other disturbance within the adjacent sensitive habitat areas.  A. No work-related activity including equipment staging, vehicular access, grading and/or vegetation removal shall be allowed outside the designated limits of work.  B. Native trees to be retained near or within the project impact area shall be identified, protected with high visibility fencing at or outside of the dripline, and avoided during construction as sensitive habitat unless additional protection measures, provided by a qualified arborist, have been reviewed and approval by Environmental Planning Staff.  C. The fencing shall be inspected and maintained daily until project completion.	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Installation of fencing to be completed prior to site disturbance with maintenance and inspection throughout construction
<b>BIO-3</b>	Impacts to special status species and sensitive habitats.	<i>Exclusion Fencing.</i> Prior to initiation of construction activities, the construction contractor shall install exclusion fencing (solid silt fencing) in specified areas along the work area boundaries, 6 inches below grade and 3.0 feet above grade, with wooden stakes at intervals of not more than 12 feet. The fence shall be maintained in working order for the duration of construction activities.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Installation to be completed prior to site disturbance with maintenance and monitoring throughout construction as



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The USFWS-approved biologist or designated trained construction monitor shall inspect the fence daily and notify the construction foreman when fence maintenance is required.</li> <li>The fence shall allow for wildlife passage across the work area at intervals to be determined in conjunction with USFWS and CDFW.</li> </ul>			specified in measure
<b>BIO-4</b>	Impacts to special status species and nesting birds.	<p><i>Construction Worker Training.</i> Prior to commencement of construction every individual working on the Project must attend biological awareness training by a USFWS-approved biologist prior to working on the job site. The training shall include at minimum information regarding the following:</p> <p>A. Location and identification of sensitive habitats and all special-status species with potential to occur in the project area including information specific to identifying these species, including a description of CRLF and its habitat, and measures to protect CRLF, and other sensitive wildlife species known or with potential to occur (western pond turtle, nesting avian species, San Francisco dusky-footed wood rat, and roosting bats) in the project study area.</p> <p>B. The importance of avoiding impacts to special-status species and their habitat, penalties for damaging habitat, and the steps necessary if any special-status species is encountered at any time.</p> <p>C. Best management practices to be implemented, identification of the limits of work, and project-specific avoidance measures and permit conditions that must be followed.</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Prior to construction mobilization, site disturbance, and grading
<b>BIO-5</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Biological Monitoring During Construction.</i> A qualified USFWS-approved biologist shall be on site to monitor all initial clearing and grubbing and ground-disturbing activities associated with the project.</p> <p>A. A single person on the jobsite (either the qualified biologist or a designated daily monitor) shall be responsible for daily monitoring activities which shall include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Checking under all equipment for wildlife before use.</li> <li>2. Inspecting all trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.</li> <li>3. Ensuring that at the end of each workday, all excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.</li> </ol>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site disturbance and grading and throughout construction as specified in measure
<b>BIO-6</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Construction Timing.</i> If feasible, construction activities in and adjacent to the sloughs shall take place during the dry season and before the first rain of the season, especially vegetation removal.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored	During site disturbance and grading as specified in

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		Avoid working at night or during rain events when special-status amphibians and mammals are generally more active. Consult weather forecasts from the National Weather Service at least 72 hours prior to performing work.		by the County Planning Department.	measure
<b>BIO-7</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>California Red-Legged Frog (CRLF) and Western Pond Turtle (WPT) Protection Measures.</i></p> <p>A. During vegetation removal in or adjacent to the sloughs, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, the agency-approved biologist will be present (or on call) to relocate CRLF (and WPT) as needed. The approved biologist shall have the authority to stop work that may result in the "take" of a special-status species. The biologist will thoroughly check all vegetation for CRLF, WPT, and other wildlife species prior to vegetation removal activities.</p> <p>B. The approved biologist or construction monitor will check under all equipment for wildlife before use. If any special-status wildlife is observed under equipment or within the work area, the approved biologist will be permitted to handle and relocate it.</p> <p>C. At the end of each work day, excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.</p> <p>D. All trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site disturbance, vegetation removal and throughout construction and grading as specified in measure.
<b>BIO-8</b>	Impacts to special status species.	To minimize take of CRLF during maintenance activities, restrict mowing and pruning to the dry season, after April 15 if feasible, or wait at least 2 weeks after March or April rains.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site maintenance as specified in measure.
<b>BIO-9</b>	Impacts to special status species.	To minimize vehicle strikes of CRLF, if feasible, restrict parking to daytime hours.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During construction.
<b>BIO-10</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>San Francisco Dusky-Footed Woodrat Pre-construction Survey.</i> Prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for woodrat houses, and clearly flag all houses within the construction impact area and immediate surroundings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The construction contractor shall avoid woodrat houses to the extent feasible by installing a minimum 10-foot (preferably 25-foot) buffer with silt fencing or other material that shall prohibit encroachment.</li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to County Planning Department	Prior to site disturbance

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If this buffer and avoidance is not feasible, the qualified biologist shall allow encroachment into the buffer, but preserve microhabitat conditions such as shade, cover and adjacent food sources.</li> <li>If avoidance of woodrat houses is not possible, in coordination with CDFW, a qualified biologist shall develop and implement a San Francisco Dusky-footed Wood rat Relocation Plan.</li> </ul>			
<b>BIO-11</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Bat Protection Measures.</i> If feasible conduct limbing/tree removal operations between September 15 and November 1 to avoid bat maternity roosts and winter hibernacula, as well as other sensitive biological resources.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Prior to tree limbing or removal between November 1 and September 15
<b>BIO-12</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Bat Protection Measures.</i> To avoid impacts to individual roosts, winter hibernacula, and maternity roosts, during all months, prior to limbing/tree removal, or rehabilitation of the steel barn a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for bats to determine if crevice or foliage roosting bats are present, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A qualified biologist shall determine if bats are utilizing the site for roosting. For any buildings or trees/snags that could provide roosting space for cavity or foliage-roosting bats, potential bat roost features shall be thoroughly evaluated to determine if bats are present. Visual inspection and/or acoustic surveys shall be utilized as initial techniques.</li> <li>If roosting bats are found, the biologist shall develop and implement acceptable passive exclusion methods in coordination with or based on CDFW recommendations. If feasible, exclusion shall take place during the appropriate windows (September and November 1) to avoid harming bat maternity roosts and/or winter hibernacula. (Authorization from CDFW is required to evict winter hibernacula for bats).</li> <li>If established maternity colonies are found, in coordination with CDFW, a buffer shall be established around the colony to protect pre-volant young from construction disturbances until the young can fly; or implement other measures acceptable to CDFW.</li> <li>If a building or tree is determined not to be an active roost site for roosting bats, proceed with work immediately. For trees to be limbed or removed, proceed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If foliage roosting bats are determined to be present (e.g. hoary bat or western red bat), limbs shall be lowered, inspected for bats by a bat biologist, and chipped immediately or moved to a dump site. Alternately, limbs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to tree limbing or removal or construction as specified in measure

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<p>may be lowered and left on the ground until the following day, when they can be chipped or moved to a dump site. No logs or tree sections shall be dropped on downed limbs or limb piles that have not been in place since the previous day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ If the tree is not limbed or removed within four days of the survey, the survey efforts shall be repeated.</li> </ul>			
<b>BIO-13</b>	Impacts to special status species and nesting birds.	<p><i>Nesting Birds.</i> The avian breeding season occurs between February 1 and September 1. If feasible, perform vegetation removal activities outside of breeding bird season to avoid direct harm or mortality to potential nesting bird species and other sensitive biological resources. For all project activities initiated during the breeding bird season, or if construction activities lapse for a period of one weeks or more during breeding bird season, a qualified biologist will conduct a breeding bird survey for nesting birds, including raptors. The survey will include potential habitat for raptors and sensitive and common nesting avian species known to occur within the Study Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys will be conducted within 7 days, prior to beginning construction activities and will include all work, staging, access areas, and minimum survey radii surrounding the work area as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ 250 feet for non-raptors;</li> <li>♦ 500 feet for small raptors such as accipiters; and</li> <li>♦ 1,000 feet for larger raptors such as buteos.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If no nesting sensitive or common avian species are observed during breeding bird surveys no additional measures would be required.</li> <li>• If common nesting birds are observed within or adjacent to vegetation proposed for removal, postpone vegetation removal activities until young have fledged to avoid direct harm or mortality of nesting birds and/or establish buffers depending on the activity and appropriate to the species.</li> <li>• Sensitive bird species, if nesting in or near the Project Area, will be given special consideration and may require additional protective measures as determined through consultation with the relevant agency (USFWS or CDFW): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Bald eagle, golden eagle: 1,300 feet;</li> <li>♦ Northern harrier, white-tailed kite, and other raptors: 300 feet;</li> <li>♦ Lawrence's goldfinch, grasshopper sparrow, yellow warbler: 75 feet; and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to vegetation removal and site disturbance as specified in measure

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Oak titmouse, olive-sided flycatcher: 50 feet.</li> </ul> <p>A qualified biologist will monitor active nest sites for construction-related disturbances and adjust protective buffers as necessary to prevent further disruption of nesting activities.</p>			
<b>BIO-14</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Sensitive Bird Species.</i> The following measures will be implemented as Best Management Practices to protect wintering sensitive bird species, if present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If any work is performed during the burrowing owl and tricolored blackbird wintering period (November - March), conduct a survey for these species.</li> <li>• The survey will be conducted by a qualified biologist and include the project area and suitable habitat within 150 meters (490 feet).</li> <li>• If burrowing owls are detected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Place visible markers near occupied burrows and fence off suitable habitat;</li> <li>♦ Avoid direct destruction of burrows, and</li> <li>♦ Include the burrowing owl in the environmental training for construction personnel</li> <li>♦ To avoid potential burrowing owl habitat, to the greatest extent feasible, avoid destruction of fossorial mammal burrows during construction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CDFW may require additional protective measures for wintering tricolored blackbirds, if observed.</li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to vegetation removal and site disturbance as specified in measure
<b>BIO-15</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Control Lighting.</i> To reduce potential impacts to sensitive habitats and special-status species that may result from artificial light, the following shall be adhered to:</p> <p>A. The project shall avoid the installation of any non-essential artificial lighting. If artificial lighting is necessary, the project shall avoid or limit the use of artificial lights during the hours of dawn and dusk, when many wildlife species are most active.</p> <p>B. All essential outdoor lighting shall be limited through the use of timers and/or motion sensors.</p> <p>C. All essential outdoor lighting shall be shielded, cast downward, and directed such that it does not shine off the property into surrounding areas, other parcels, or the night sky.</p>	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During construction and project operations
<b>BIO-16</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Special Status Species Encountered During Construction.</i> If any individual special-status species is found at any time prior to or during construction, work shall cease immediately in the vicinity of the individual and likely to be injured or killed by work activities, it</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County	During construction

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		shall either be allowed to move out of harm's way on its own or a qualified biologist, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, shall move it to the nearest suitable habitat outside of the project impact area. The biologist shall be allowed enough time to move any special-status species from the site before work activities begin.	obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Planning Department.	
<b>BIO-17</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Western Pond Turtle Discovery.</i> If a western pond turtle egg clutch is discovered during pre-construction surveys, or at any time during construction, work in the vicinity of the egg clutch shall be halted immediately. Unless otherwise advised by CDFW, the nest location shall be surrounded with high visibility fencing under the guidance of a qualified biologist and shall be avoided until the biologist determines that the clutch has hatched and individuals are no longer likely to be injured by work activities.	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During pre-construction surveys, site disturbance and construction
<b>BIO-18</b>	Impacts to sensitive habitats.	<i>Sensitive Habitat Replacement.</i> To comply with Santa Cruz County General Plan Policy 5.1.12, SCCC Section 16.32.090 (C)(1)(a), and to compensate for impacts to Coastal Scrub, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Mixed Willow Riparian, Seasonal Wetlands, Freshwater Marsh, and Aquatic Habitat (Hanson Slough) and inadvertent impacts that will result from future use of the project site, the following shall be adhered to: A. All areas temporarily disturbed as a result of the project shall be restored to pre-project contours to the maximum extent possible and re-vegetated with native plant species appropriate to the habitat disturbed. B. All sensitive habitats permanently impacted as a result of the project shall be compensated for at a minimum 2:1 ratio through restoration or establishment of in-kind habitat at designated restoration areas on site. C. A Habitat Restoration Plan prepared by a qualified biologist or restoration specialist shall be submitted to, and approved by, the County Environmental Coordinator prior to the final CEQA determination.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Habitat Restoration Plan to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to site disturbance for preparation of the Habitat Restoration Plan with implementation after construction in accordance with provisions of the Plan

## **Coastal Development Permit Findings**

- (A) That the project is a use allowed in one of the basic zone districts that are listed in LCP Section 13.10.170(D) as consistent with the LCP Land Use Plan designation of the site.

This finding can be made, in that the property is zoned CA (Commercial Agriculture), a designation which allows agricultural uses. The proposed community harvest gateway will be ancillary to the principal permitted agricultural production use allowed within the zone district, and the zoning is consistent with the site's A (Agriculture) General Plan designation.

- (B) That the project does not conflict with any existing easement or development restrictions such as public access, utility, or open space easements.

This finding can be made, in that no such easements or restrictions are known to encumber the project site. The project will provide public access to the property per the Land Trust's program statement.

- (C) That the project is consistent with the design criteria and special use standards and conditions of this chapter pursuant to SCCC 13.20.130 and 13.20.140 et seq.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed structures will be designed and located on the site in a manner that will be consistent with the existing agricultural structures and improvements in the project vicinity.

- (D) That the project conforms with the public access, recreation, and visitor-serving policies, standards and maps of the LCP Land Use Plan, including Chapter 2: Section 2.5 and Chapter 7.

This finding can be made, in that the project site is not identified as a priority acquisition site in the County Local Coastal Program and public beach access is available at Sunset State Beach. The project will provide public access to the property and passive recreation opportunities per the Land Trust's program statement.

- (E) That the project conforms to all other applicable standards of the certified LCP.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed improvements are sited and designed to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of the surrounding agricultural area. The project will provide access to open space areas and passive recreation opportunities while also protecting and preserving natural resources in the project vicinity.

- (F) If the project is located between the nearest through public road and the sea or the shoreline of any body of water located within the Coastal Zone, that the project conforms to the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

This finding can be made, in that the project site is not located between the shoreline and the first public road. Consequently, the community harvest gateway will not interfere with public access to the beach, ocean, or any nearby body of water. Further, the project site is not identified as a priority acquisition site in the County Local Coastal Program.

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- (G) In the event of any conflicts between or among the required findings, required findings in subsections (E) and (F) of this section shall prevail.

This finding can be made, in that there are no conflicts among the required Coastal Development Permit findings.



## **Discretionary Permit Findings**

- (a) **Health and Safety.** The proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be developed, 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 be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

This finding can be made, in that the project is located in an area designated for agricultural uses and the primary use of the property will continue to be agricultural production. Construction will comply with prevailing building technology, the California Building Code, and the County Building ordinance to ensure that the project 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 be materially injurious to properties or improvements in the vicinity.

- (b) **Zoning Conformance.** The proposed location of the project and the conditions under which it would be developed, operated, or maintained will be in substantial conformance with the intent and requirements of 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 location of the proposed improvements and the conditions under which they would be operated or maintained will in substantial conformance with all pertinent County ordinances and the purpose of the CA (Commercial Agriculture) zone district as the proposed community harvest gateway use will be ancillary to the primary use of the property for agricultural production. The proposed development will be located on existing disturbed portions of the project site and the existing farming operations on the subject property would not be adversely affected by the proposed uses. All intensive human activity elements (community harvest barn, parking area, picnic areas, and farmworker housing RV pads) would be located over 200 feet from surrounding agricultural resource designated parcels. The community harvest proposal is designed to provide additional awareness and education to the local community regarding agriculture and natural resource management, which will provide an added benefit to supporting agricultural production in the region.

- (c) **General Plan Conformance.** The proposed project is in substantial conformance with the intent, goals, objectives, and policies of all elements of the County General Plan and any specific plan which has been adopted for the area.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway will be ancillary to the primary agricultural use of the property as specified for the A (Agriculture) land use designation in the County General Plan.

The proposed project will be consistent with General Plan objective ARC 1.1 (Preserve Commercial Agricultural Land) and General Plan policies ARC-1.1.6 (Principal Permitted Uses on Commercial Agricultural Zoned Land), ARC-1.1.12 (Location of Agricultural Support Facilities), ARC-1.4.5 (Siting to Minimize Conflicts), and ARC-1.4.10 (Farmworker Housing as an Agricultural Use) related to agricultural resources, in that the primary use of the property will continue to be agricultural production, the proposed improvements will be located on existing disturbed areas of the property, the project will provide educational opportunities for the public in support of agricultural production and natural resource preservation, and the farmworker housing

units will provide housing for agricultural employees on the site.

The proposed project will be consistent with General Plan policies ARC-5.1.2 (Development Within Visual Resource Areas), ARC-5.1.3 (Protection of Public Vistas and Scenic Assets), and ARC-5.1.5 (Preserving Agricultural Vistas) related to scenic resources, in that the proposed development is screened from the viewshed of the Highway 1 scenic corridor by existing topography and vegetation; and the proposed structures will be designed to blend with the existing agricultural structures located in the surrounding area.

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

- (d) CEQA Conformance. The proposed project complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and any significant adverse impacts on the natural environment will be mitigated pursuant to CEQA.

This finding can be made, in that a Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act.

- (e) Utilities and Traffic Impacts. The proposed use will not overload utilities, result in inefficient or wasteful use of energy, or generate more than the acceptable level of traffic on the streets in the vicinity.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway will be accessed via Lee Road. Additional access for bicycles and pedestrians will be available via the Lee Road trail and bridge across Struve slough once it is constructed. The project would create a small incremental increase in traffic on nearby roads and intersections of approximately 125 daily trips with approximately 12 peak hour trips. Such an increase will not adversely impact existing roads or intersections in the surrounding area. In addition, all construction will comply with prevailing building technology, the California Building Code, and the County Building ordinance to ensure that the project will not overload utilities or otherwise result in an inefficient or wasteful use of energy.

- (f) Neighborhood Compatibility. The proposed use will be compatible with the existing and proposed land uses, land use intensities, and dwelling unit densities of the neighborhood, as designated by the General Plan and Local Coastal Program and implementing ordinances.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway will be ancillary to the primary agricultural production use of the property and the proposed improvements will be consistent with the land use intensity and dwelling unit densities of the surrounding agricultural area as designated by the General Plan and implementing ordinances.

- (g) Local Coastal Program Consistency. For proposed projects located within the coastal zone, the proposed project is consistent with the provisions of the certified Local Coastal Program.

This finding can be made, in that the required Coastal Development Permit findings have been made for this project and the project is consistent with the provisions of the certified Local Coastal

Program.

### **Site Development Permit Findings**

- (a) Siting and Neighborhood Context. The proposed development is designed and located on the site so that it will complement and harmonize with the physical design aspects of existing and proposed development in the neighborhood, as designated by the General Plan and Local Coastal Program and implementing ordinances.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway is designed and located on the site in a manner that will complement and harmonize with the physical design aspects of the existing and proposed agricultural development in the surrounding area.

- (b) Design. The proposed development is in substantial conformance with applicable principles in the adopted Countywide Design Guidelines, except as prohibited by site constraints, and any other applicable requirements of SCCC 13.11 (Site Development and Design Review). If located in the Coastal Zone, the site plan and building design are also in substantial conformance with the policies of the Local Coastal Program and coastal regulations of SCCC 13.20.

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway is in substantial conformance with the requirements of the County Design Review Ordinance. The proposed improvements will be located in an existing disturbed area; are designed in a manner that will enhance the aesthetic qualities of the subject property; and will not result in visual impacts to scenic resources or surrounding land uses.

## **Required Findings for Development on Land Zoned Commercial Agriculture or Agricultural Preserve - SCCC 13.10.314(A)**

- (1) That the establishment or maintenance of this use will enhance or support the continued operation of commercial agriculture on the parcel (excepting public/quasi-public community facilities of significant benefit to public health, safety, and welfare) and will not reduce, restrict, or adversely affect agricultural activities or resources, or the economic viability of commercial agricultural operations, in the area;

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway and recreational trails will allow continued operation of the existing agricultural uses on the property, while promoting agriculture in the region by providing an opportunity for members of the local community to participate in local agriculture and to have access to quality food, educational experiences, and enjoyment of open space on the property. The benefits from this project can be considered as offering an educational experience and opportunity to connect people to both agriculture and the natural environment.

- (2) The use is sited on the property to avoid removing land from production and to preserve agricultural resource soils. If avoidance and preservation is not possible, remove as little land as possible from agricultural production and future production. Technical reports may be required to demonstrate conservation of farmland to the maximum extent feasible; and

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest gateway (barn and parking area) will be located in an area of existing disturbance (existing barn and work area) with direct access to Lee Road. The proposed community harvest areas will continue to be in agricultural production. The proposed picnic areas and support facilities are located in areas away from ongoing agricultural production, with trails proposed along the edge of the wetlands that are not suited for farming purposes. The proposed farmworker housing sites are proposed to be located in place of prior farmworker housing units that have been removed from the site. The ongoing stewardship of the property by a non-profit organization (Land Trust of Santa Cruz County) will ensure that agricultural production on the Watsonville Slough Farm property will continue into the future.

- (3)
  - (a) That the use or structure is ancillary to the principal agricultural use of the parcel, or to parcels owned or leased by the operator where so indicated in SCCC 13.10.312(D), Agricultural Uses Chart; or

This finding can be made, in that the proposed community harvest use and associated improvements will be ancillary to the principal agricultural use of the property. All of the proposed uses and structures will be located away from ongoing agricultural operations and have been designed to be compatible with the ongoing agricultural use of the property.

The proposed farmworker housing units are considered as an agricultural use, per General Plan Policy ARC-1.4.10 (Farmworker Housing as an Agricultural Use), and will complement the ongoing and continued principal agricultural use of the property through provision of on-site housing for agricultural employees.

- (b) That no other agricultural use is feasible for the parcel; or

- (c) That the use consists of an interim public use which does not impair long-term agricultural viability; or
- (d) The use consists of a permanent public use that will result in the production of recycled wastewater facility solely for agricultural irrigation and that limits and mitigates the impacts of facility construction on agriculture consistent with the requirements of SCCC 13.10.635 and 13.10.643; or

The use consists of a permanent discretionary community or public facility use as allowed in the Agricultural Uses Chart that the County has determined to be of significant benefit to the public health, safety, and welfare, subject to the following additional findings:

- (i) Loss of commercial agricultural land is mitigated, which may include a permanent agricultural conservation easement on land of at least equal quality and size, as partial compensation for the direct loss of agricultural land, mitigations consistent with 13.10.643(D), or other feasible mitigations;\*
- (ii) For public facility uses with a development area greater than 12,000 square feet, an analysis is provided of two alternate sites located off agricultural resource land, identifying why development on these sites is not feasible;
- (iii) The public facility use does not significantly degrade air and water quality;
- (iv) If located in the Coastal Zone, the public facility use is consistent with the California Coastal Act; and
- (v) If located on Type 3 agricultural land in the Coastal Zone, the public facility use does not impair agricultural viability through increased assessment costs to other agricultural parcels in the area.\*

\* The Pajaro River Flood Risk Management Project and other flood control projects for which environmental documentation compliant with CEQA has been prepared are exempt from findings (i) and (v).

### **Required Findings for Total Development Area on Commercial Agriculture (CA) Zoned Land - SCCC 13.10.313(E)**

#### **(1) Residential and Agricultural Support Uses.**

- (b) For proposed residential or agricultural support uses that would result a combined development area for residential and agricultural support uses on Type 1-3 soils greater than 35,000 square feet, a Conditional Use Permit and master plan shall be required, and the following findings shall apply:
  - (i) An alternative sites analysis provided by the applicant and supported by technical

studies demonstrates that there are no feasible sites available on the subject parcel or on other parcels owned or leased by the applicant that are located off Type I-3 agricultural land and viable agricultural soils that could accommodate the proposed use; and

This finding can be made, in that the farmable portions of the site have been determined by the existing farm operators and the Land Trust to remove the less suitable portions of the property from active farming. The less suitable areas for farming have been set aside for restoration and natural resource preservation, including buffer areas for the adjacent wetlands. The proposed community harvest barn and associated improvements have been located in areas of existing disturbance and will not result in the removal of any active farmland from production.

- (i) There are no feasible alternatives for site design, surfacing materials, or other measures available to accommodate the proposed use that would reduce the total development area on Type 1-3 soils below 35,000 sq. ft. and substantially reduce impacts to viable agricultural land; and

This finding can be made, in that the community harvest proposal has been proposed at a scale that will allow a combination of agricultural support uses in one location, and all proposed improvements will be located within existing disturbed areas of the property that have not been actively farmed and where structures and site improvements have been historically located.

- (ii) Farmable portions on the subject parcel, or farmable areas on other sites owned by the agricultural operator equal or greater in size than the total development area of the subject parcel, have been placed in a permanent agricultural easement to protect the land for future farming use.

This finding can be made, in that the Land Trust has secured the property in order to maintain the ongoing farming operations in perpetuity.

### **Riparian Exception Findings**

1. That there are special circumstances or conditions affecting the property.

The property is owned by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and managed with the combined goals of preserving agricultural land, restoring coastal ecosystems, and connecting people with nature. The property is protected from residential and commercial development and has been the subject of extensive habitat restoration efforts, including direct planting of riparian forest and wetlands.

2. That the exception is necessary for the proper design and function of some permitted or existing activity on the property.

The proposed improvements are part of an existing working farm including the network of existing agricultural access roads and walking trails that traverse the farm fields. New features such as viewing platforms and boardwalks will allow continued and improved pedestrian use of these trails.

3. That the granting of the exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property downstream or in the area in which the project is located.

The project will benefit the public through increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables, education about sustainable agriculture, and connecting people with nature. The project has been designed to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic habitat as much as possible during construction, and any exposed soil will be stabilized with standard erosion BMPs to ensure no downstream sedimentation occurs.

4. That the granting of the exception, in the Coastal Zone, will not reduce or adversely impact the riparian corridor, and there is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative.

The project will not reduce or adversely impact any riparian corridors. Construction related environmental impacts have been avoided or minimized to the maximum extent possible and the finished project will have an overall benefit to the environment.

5. That the granting of the exception is in accordance with the purpose of this chapter, and with the objectives of the General Plan and elements thereof, and the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan.

The granting of the exception is in accordance with the purpose of the Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection Ordinance, and with the objectives of the General Plan. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to the riparian corridor and sensitive habitat as defined in the Santa Cruz County Code Sections 16.30 and 16.32 to the maximum practicable extent and habitat restoration activities associated with the project will result in a net increase in wetland and riparian habitat.

## Conditions of Approval

Exhibit D: Project plans, prepared by SSA Landscape Architects, revised 5/1/24.

- I. This permit authorizes the construction of the community harvest gateway barn, farmworker housing, recreational trails, and associated improvements 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 Santa Cruz County Planning one copy of the approval to indicate acceptance and agreement with the conditions thereof.
  - B. Obtain a Demolition Permit from the Santa Cruz County Building Official, if required.
  - C. Obtain a Building Permit from the Santa Cruz County Building Official.
    1. Any outstanding balance due to Santa Cruz County Planning 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.
  - D. Obtain a Grading Permit from the Santa Cruz County Building Official, if required.
  - E. 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 Santa Cruz County Planning. The final plans shall be in substantial compliance with the plans marked Exhibit "D" on file with Santa Cruz County Planning. 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 Santa Cruz County Planning



review and approval.

3. The building plans for the proposed barn shall include a roof plan and a surveyed contour map of the ground surface, superimposed and extended to allow height measurement of all features. Spot elevations shall be provided at points on the structure that have the greatest difference between ground surface and the highest portion of the structure above. This requirement is in addition to the standard requirement of detailed elevations and cross-sections and the topography of the project site which clearly depict the total height of the proposed structure. Maximum height for the agricultural structure is 40 feet.
  4. Grading, drainage, and erosion control plans.
  5. Details showing compliance with fire department requirements.
  6. A Water Efficient Landscape Plan prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (County Code Chapter 13.13) by a certified/licensed landscape architect, landscape contractor, civil engineer, landscape irrigation designer, landscape irrigation auditor, or water manager. WELO-exempt projects, residential projects of up to two units, or landscapes where at least 30% of the water use is provided by graywater, recycled water or captured rainwater may provide either a signed Water Efficient Landscape Checklist or a Water Efficient Landscape Plan.
    - a. Any landscape plan submitted to comply with SCCC Ch. 13.13 shall include a Water Efficient Landscape Plan Submittal Compliance Statement.
- B. Meet all requirements of the County Department of Public Works, Stormwater Management. Drainage fees will be assessed on the net increase in impervious area. Stormwater Management comments, dated 2/29/24, include the following requirements:

Please provide the following with building and grading permit applications:

1. Final Stormwater Management Plan (SWP)/Civil Plans:

Provide final stormwater management plan/civil plans consistent with the requirements in Appendix D. Please provide the following:

- a. Show existing and proposed impervious, semi-impervious, and disturbed areas with details for each proposed surface type on the civil plans,
- b. The plan shall clearly illustrate how stormwater runoff from all

project areas will be conveyed and controlled (provide spot elevations, slopes, grade breaks, cross sections, roof plan, and other information as necessary) and how safe stormwater overflow has been incorporated into the project design,

- c. Demonstrate that the proposed biofiltration facilities and water and sewer facilities are adequately separated and are adequately separated from groundwater levels.
- d. Adequate construction level details for grading and drainage facilities. The details for biofiltration planter (1/C5.0) and pervious concrete pavement (5/C5.0) shall specify infiltration test method. Detail 5/C5.0 shall also specify minimum acceptable infiltration rate.
- e. Include storm drain markings “No Dumping Drains to Bay” at any inlet in the project limits. These markings shall be maintained by the property owner and identified in the maintenance agreement.
- f. Provide details for flow control and outlet structures consistent with the final stormwater management report.
- g. Include information in 1/C5.0 to specify if mulch will be included in the planters and if so that the mulch shall be non-floating and that 6” of ponding will be provided above the mulch elevation.

2. Stormwater Management Report:

Provide a final dated, signed and stamped report with analysis supporting the final stormwater management plan and demonstrating compliance with the County Design Criteria requirements.

- a. Please provide information as to whether this site is covered by the State Water Resources Control Board Industrial General Stormwater Permit, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Agricultural Order 4.0, or any other State or Regional Board NPDES permit. If so, describe what specific water quality mitigations or standards are required and how they have been designed and incorporated. If the site is not subject to the Industrial General Permit, Agricultural Order or any other site specific NPDES stormwater permit the project shall meet the CDC large project requirements for minimizing stormwater pollutants of concern (see pages 59-60 in the CDC). Provide analysis demonstrating compliance.

- b. Documentation demonstrating technical infeasibility if design consistent with any portion of these Design Criteria is anticipated to not be achieved. If infiltration of the 2 year, 2 hour storm is not accomplished provide technical justification as to why this is not technically feasible and to justify using the lower priority biofiltration treatment.
3. Recorded maintenance agreement(s) SWM 25B for stormwater management and mitigation facilities will be required. Include attachments showing: watershed map with locations of all stormwater facilities, detailed management activities, maintenance requirements, schedule, signs of system failure, and responsible party for all facilities on the project site. Include a statement that no additional impervious or semi-impervious areas will be added on the project site without additional permits and mitigations. The checklists for the biofiltration and pervious pavement area shall include annual infiltration testing – the test method and minimum allowable infiltration rate shall be specified in the agreement.
4. If the parcel being developed receives existing runoff from an adjacent drainage areas, the recordation of a drainage easement, maintenance agreement, deed restriction, or other document recorded on the parcel deed/s will be required. The recorded document shall acknowledge that the parcel does and will continue to receive upstream runoff, that the property owner is responsible for maintenance of the drainage pathway (natural and/or man-made) through the parcel, and that the County and Flood Control District(s) are not responsible for the upstream runoff or for maintenance of the drainage pathway. This may be combined in the SWM-25B.
5. Zone 7A impervious area impact fees will be assessed at the time of building/grading permit issuance based on the net increase in permitted impervious areas. For credit for existing areas to be replaced please provide documentation demonstrating these areas were built with a permit or prior to 2005. The current fee schedule is \$1.57 per square foot of new impervious area and is subject to change each year.

County staff will inspect the construction of the drainage related items. Please provide an engineer's construction estimate. A deposit of 3% will be assessed at the time of building/grading permit issuance for this inspection.

- B. Obtain an Environmental Health Clearance for this project from the County Department of Environmental Health Services.
- C. Meet all requirements of the Environmental Planning section of Santa Cruz County

Planning, including the following conditions:

1. A Project-specific monitoring plan shall be developed, in consultation with the local Native American community, to guide the Project's compliance with cultural resource requirements during Project construction. The plan will be designed to adequately address treatment of cultural resources under CEQA guidelines (Article 5: Section 15064.5) and NHPA guidelines (36 CFR 800.6). The monitoring plan shall be submitted with building permit application.
  2. In the event that precolonial or historic resources are encountered during excavation and/or grading of the site, all activity within a 50-foot radius of the find will be stopped, the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement will be notified, and the archaeologist will examine the find and make appropriate recommendations prior to issuance of building permits. Recommendations could include collection, recordation, and analysis of any significant cultural materials. A report of findings documenting any data recovery during monitoring would be submitted to the Environmental Resource Planner.
  3. In the event that human remains are discovered during excavation and/or grading of the site, all activity within a 50-foot radius of the find will be stopped. The Santa Cruz County Coroner will be notified and shall make a determination as to whether the remains are of Native American origin or whether an investigation into the cause of death is required. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the Coroner will notify the NAHC immediately. Once NAHC identifies the most likely descendants, the descendants will make recommendations regarding proper burial, which will be implemented in accordance with Section 15064.5(e) of the CEQA Guidelines.
  4. 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.
  5. The building permit application shall provide the contact information for the archaeologist of record.
- D. Meet all requirements and recommendations of Biotic Report Review (REV231100), including the attached conditions.
- E. Meet all requirements of the Housing section of Santa Cruz County Planning,

including the following conditions:

1. Prior to hearing or administrative approval, applicant shall sign, notarize, and submit the attached Farmworker Housing deed restriction to Housing staff for recordation. This document will be recorded against the property title as a condition of approval. Project will be subject to annual monitoring by the Housing Division or the Enforcement Agency (Environmental Health), as applicable, for compliance with this deed restriction.
2. If project will house five or more farmworkers, regardless of how many units are in the project, Owner shall obtain a License from the Enforcement Agency, as defined in 13.10.631(D), prior to permit issuance, and shall renew license annually as long as the project continues to be used for farmworker housing for 5 or more farmworkers, or shall file a notice of non-renewal when/if applicable.
3. Project shall comply with permitting requirements, development standards, and related requirements of 13.10.631(D) and (F).
4. Prior to initial leasing or occupancy of each farmworker housing unit, provide County Housing staff with documentation of proposed tenant/occupant's current status as an Agricultural Employee as defined in SCCC 13.10.631 (below) employed by Owner or by another Agricultural Employer (as defined in below) in the vicinity (whichever employer is occupant's primary source of employment). Documentation shall consist of Employer's payroll data showing employee name and job title and hours per week or month in agricultural employment, to verify occupant's farmworker status. One of the four units may be occupied by Property Owner's caretaker employee employed by Owner to provide security and maintenance of the site, rather than a farmworker, at Owner's option. In that case documentation shall be provided to reflect occupant's employment by Owner as the site caretaker. This documentation is solely for the purpose of documenting the housing unit's status as a farmworker (or caretaker, as applicable) housing unit, and for no other purpose.

"Agricultural Employee" means an employee engaged in agriculture, which includes farming in all its branches, including but not limited to the cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities, the raising of livestock, bees, furbearing animals, or poultry, and any practices performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with such farming operations, including preparation for market and delivery to storage or to market or to carriers for transportation to market, as further defined in California Labor Code §1140.4(b). "Agricultural Employee" also means farm worker, farmworker, or farm laborer. "Agricultural Employee" does not include persons engaged in household domestic service, or certain employees of religious or charitable

entities listed in Section 17005(b) and (c) of the Act. Agricultural Employees earn their primary income through permanent or seasonal agricultural labor.

“Agricultural Employer” means one engaged in an agriculture who employs employees, as further defined in Labor Code Section 1140.4(c).

- F. Meet all requirements and pay any applicable plan check fee of the CalFire (County Fire Department).
  - G. Submit 3 copies of plan review letters prepared and stamped by the project Geotechnical Engineer.
  - H. Pay the current fees Child Care mitigation at the time of building permit issuance. The fees are based on new square footage. Current Child Care fees for new office area is \$2.26 per square foot.
    - 1. A list of specific agricultural support structures and facilities are exempt from Child Care fees, per SCCC 15.04.050(K).
  - I. Pay the current Affordable Housing Impact Fee at the time of building permit issuance. The fees are based on new square footage. The current fee for non-residential construction is \$3 per square foot, and non-habitable agricultural structures are \$1 per square foot.
  - J. Provide required off-street parking as indicated on the approved Exhibit "D" for this permit. Parking spaces must be 8.5 feet wide by 18 feet long and must be located entirely outside vehicular rights-of way. Parking must be clearly designated on the plot plan.
  - K. 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.
- III. Prior to any site disturbance or physical construction on the subject property the following condition(s) shall be met:
- A. Pre-Construction Meeting: In order to ensure that the mitigation measures are communicated to the various parties responsible for constructing the project, prior to any disturbance on the property the applicant shall convene a pre-construction meeting on the site. The following parties shall attend: the applicant, grading contractor supervisor, the project biologist, and Santa Cruz County Environmental Planning staff.
- IV. 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 required mitigation measures shall be implemented during construction, as specified in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program attached to these conditions.
- B. All site improvements shown on the final approved Building Permit plans shall be installed.
- C. All inspections required by the building permit shall be completed to the satisfaction of the County Building Official.
- D. The project must comply with all recommendations of the approved soils reports.
- E. A Landscape Installation Certificate prepared in accordance with the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (County Code Chapter 13.13) shall be provided.
- F. 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.

V. Operational Conditions

A. Master Site Plan

- 1. This approval for a Master Site Plan authorizes a community harvest gateway barn, parking area, and associated improvements; the construction of a recreational trail system; and four RV pads for farmworker housing, as indicated on the approved Exhibit "D" for this permit and the Watsonville Slough Farm Program Statement submitted by the project applicant.
- 2. Any modifications to this permit shall require an amendment to the Master Site Plan.
  - a. The various improvements (parking area, community harvest barn, ancillary structures, RV parking pads, and recreational trail system) may be constructed in phases as indicated in the Watsonville Slough Farm Program Statement submitted by the project applicant.
  - b. Variations in phasing of improvements may be authorized administratively by the Santa Cruz County Planning at the request of the applicant.
  - c. Changes in trail location and/or design to address environmental conditions or to protect natural resources may be authorized

administratively by the Santa Cruz County Planning at the request of the applicant.

**B. Community Harvest Gateway**

1. The Community Harvest Gateway barn is authorized to serve as an agricultural support facility and educational/community center, with ancillary office facilities, as indicated in the Watsonville Slough Farm Program Statement submitted by the project applicant.
2. The Community Harvest Gateway barn, parking area, and associated improvements (including the Little Bee Barn area) are authorized to host community events and educational groups (in addition to providing parking and support for the recreational trail system), as indicated in the Watsonville Slough Farm Program Statement submitted by the project applicant, and subject to the following conditions:
  - a. The number of school visits and educational events involving pre-school through 12th grade students shall not be limited by this permit.
  - b. The maximum number of organized events (other than school visits and educational events) of fewer than 50 guests (not including agricultural or Land Trust employees) at the Community Harvest Barn or Little Bee Barn shall not be limited by this permit.
  - c. The maximum number of organized events (other than school visits and educational events) of 50 to 100 guests (not including agricultural or Land Trust employees) Community Harvest Barn or Little Bee Barn shall be limited to no more than 24 days per year.
  - d. The maximum number of organized events (other than school visits and educational events) of more than 100 guests (not including agricultural or Land Trust employees) Community Harvest Barn or Little Bee Barn shall be limited to no more than 12 days per year.
  - e. Individuals visiting the site to access the community harvest facilities or recreational trails on an individual and non-scheduled basis shall not be limited or counted as attendees for the limited number of events specified in these conditions.
  - f. Open-access to the Community Harvest barn and facilities (as an unscheduled and un-ticketed event) to participate in community harvest activities on the property shall not be counted towards the total number of event days authorized by this permit. A farmers market occurring one day per week is allowed at the Community Harvest Barn site in addition to the event days authorized by this permit.



- g. Commercial use of the property (including the Community Harvest Barn or Little Bee Barn sites) for individual rented events (such as weddings, birthdays, or other individual and exclusive events or celebrations, where the site is rented for exclusive use by persons not affiliated with the Land Trust) is not authorized by this permit.
- h. Modifications to the maximum number of events or attendees may be requested as an amendment to this permit. Minor modifications may be processed as a Minor Variation to this permit.

C. Recreational Trail System

- 1. The approval of the recreational trail system is for a non-commercial trail system and associated access improvements.
- 2. No fees shall be charged to trail users for public recreational access on the property.
- 3. If a permit program is implemented (to limit trail access and/or parking to permit holders) there shall be no fee collected for any permits issued to allow trail access and/or parking.
- 4. Commercial operators are not authorized to utilize the trail system to conduct guided trips for a fee, or to provide shuttle service to the trailhead with the intent of utilizing the trail system for a fee.
- 5. Any change to this permit to collect fees for public recreational access, or to otherwise convert the authorized use of the property to a commercial recreational facility, shall require an amendment to the Master Site Plan approval and shall be limited to be consistent with the requirements specified in County Code sections 13.10.353(B) and 13.14 et. seq. for temporary day use.

- D. 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.

VI. Indemnification

The applicant/owner shall indemnify, defend with counsel approved by the COUNTY, and hold harmless the COUNTY, its officers, employees, and agents from and against any claim (including reasonable attorney's fees, expert fees, and all other costs and fees of litigation), against the COUNTY, its officers, employees, and agents arising out of or in connection to this development approval or any subsequent amendment of this development approval which is requested by the

applicant/owner, regardless of the COUNTY's passive negligence, but excepting such loss or damage which is caused by the sole active negligence or willful misconduct of the COUNTY. Should the COUNTY in its sole discretion find the applicant's/owner's legal counsel unacceptable, then the applicant/owner shall reimburse the COUNTY its costs of defense, including without limitation reasonable attorney's fees, expert fees, and all other costs and fees of litigation. The applicant/owner shall promptly pay any final judgment rendered against the COUNTY (and its officers, employees, and agents) covered by this indemnity obligation. It is expressly understood and agreed that the foregoing provisions are intended to be as broad and inclusive as is permitted by the law of the State of California and will survive termination of this development approval.

- A. The COUNTY shall promptly notify the applicant/owner of any claim, action, or proceeding against which the COUNTY seeks to be defended, indemnified, or held harmless. The COUNTY shall cooperate fully in such defense.
- 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. Settlement. The applicant/owner shall not be required to pay or perform any settlement unless such applicant/owner has approved the settlement. When representing the COUNTY, the applicant/owner 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. Successors Bound. The "applicant/owner" shall include the applicant and/or the owner and the successor(s) in interest, transferee(s), and assign(s) of the applicant and/or the owner.

#### VII. Mitigation Monitoring Program

The mitigation measures listed under this heading have been incorporated in the conditions of approval for this project in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. As required by Section 21081.6 of the California Public Resources Code, a monitoring and reporting program for the above mitigation is hereby adopted as a condition of approval for this project. This program is specifically described following each mitigation measure listed below. The purpose of this monitoring is to ensure compliance with the environmental mitigations during project implementation and operation. Failure to comply with the conditions of approval, including the terms of the adopted monitoring program, may result in permit revocation pursuant to section 18.10.462 of the Santa Cruz County Code.

#### VIII. Mitigation measures

A. See attached pages.

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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 is obtained for the first phase of the project consisting of one of the primary structures 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.**

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Zoning Administrator

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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.



## County of Santa Cruz

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
701 OCEAN STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060  
PLANNING (831) 454-2580 PUBLIC WORKS (831) 454-2160  
[HTTPS://CDI.SANTACRUZCOUNTYCA.GOV/](https://cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov/)

## MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM for Application No. 231264

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
<b>BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>					
<b>BIO-1</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Pre-construction Surveys.</i> Prior to commencement of any vegetation removal (including clearing and grubbing), a qualified biologist shall survey the project disturbance area to identify the presence of any special-status species.	Applicant	Include measure as project Condition of Approval (COA). Survey to be submitted to County Planning Department.	Prior to site disturbance
<b>BIO-2</b>	Impacts to special status species and sensitive habitats.	<i>Areas to Be Protected During Construction.</i> Prior to initiation of construction activities, a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist shall identify areas to be protected with exclusion fencing and all areas requiring monitoring a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist. Prior to commencement of construction, high visibility exclusion fencing and/or flagging shall be installed with the assistance of a qualified biologist to indicate the limits of work and prevent inadvertent grading or other disturbance within the adjacent sensitive habitat areas. A. No work-related activity including equipment staging, vehicular access, grading and/or vegetation removal shall be allowed outside the designated limits of work. B. Native trees to be retained near or within the project impact area shall be identified, protected with high visibility fencing at or outside of the dripline, and avoided during construction as sensitive habitat unless additional protection measures, provided by a qualified arborist, have been reviewed and approval by Environmental Planning Staff. C. The fencing shall be inspected and maintained daily until project completion.	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Installation of fencing to be completed prior to site disturbance with maintenance and inspection throughout construction
<b>BIO-3</b>	Impacts to special status species and sensitive habitats.	<i>Exclusion Fencing.</i> Prior to initiation of construction activities, the construction contractor shall install exclusion fencing (solid silt fencing) in specified areas along the work area boundaries, 6 inches below grade and 3.0 feet above grade, with wooden stakes at intervals of not more than 12 feet. The fence shall be maintained in working order for the duration of construction activities.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Installation to be completed prior to site disturbance with maintenance and monitoring throughout construction as

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The USFWS-approved biologist or designated trained construction monitor shall inspect the fence daily and notify the construction foreman when fence maintenance is required.</li> <li>The fence shall allow for wildlife passage across the work area at intervals to be determined in conjunction with USFWS and CDFW.</li> </ul>			specified in measure
<b>BIO-4</b>	Impacts to special status species and nesting birds.	<p><i>Construction Worker Training.</i> Prior to commencement of construction every individual working on the Project must attend biological awareness training by a USFWS-approved biologist prior to working on the job site. The training shall include at minimum information regarding the following:</p> <p>A. Location and identification of sensitive habitats and all special-status species with potential to occur in the project area including information specific to identifying these species, including a description of CRLF and its habitat, and measures to protect CRLF, and other sensitive wildlife species known or with potential to occur (western pond turtle, nesting avian species, San Francisco dusky-footed wood rat, and roosting bats) in the project study area.</p> <p>B. The importance of avoiding impacts to special-status species and their habitat, penalties for damaging habitat, and the steps necessary if any special-status species is encountered at any time.</p> <p>C. Best management practices to be implemented, identification of the limits of work, and project-specific avoidance measures and permit conditions that must be followed.</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Prior to construction mobilization, site disturbance, and grading
<b>BIO-5</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Biological Monitoring During Construction.</i> A qualified USFWS-approved biologist shall be on site to monitor all initial clearing and grubbing and ground-disturbing activities associated with the project.</p> <p>A. A single person on the jobsite (either the qualified biologist or a designated daily monitor) shall be responsible for daily monitoring activities which shall include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Checking under all equipment for wildlife before use.</li> <li>2. Inspecting all trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.</li> <li>3. Ensuring that at the end of each workday, all excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.</li> </ol>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site disturbance and grading and throughout construction as specified in measure
<b>BIO-6</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Construction Timing.</i> If feasible, construction activities in and adjacent to the sloughs shall take place during the dry season and before the first rain of the season, especially vegetation removal.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored	During site disturbance and grading as specified in

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		Avoid working at night or during rain events when special-status amphibians and mammals are generally more active. Consult weather forecasts from the National Weather Service at least 72 hours prior to performing work.		by the County Planning Department.	measure
<b>BIO-7</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>California Red-Legged Frog (CRLF) and Western Pond Turtle (WPT) Protection Measures.</i></p> <p>A. During vegetation removal in or adjacent to the sloughs, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, the agency-approved biologist will be present (or on call) to relocate CRLF (and WPT) as needed. The approved biologist shall have the authority to stop work that may result in the "take" of a special-status species. The biologist will thoroughly check all vegetation for CRLF, WPT, and other wildlife species prior to vegetation removal activities.</p> <p>B. The approved biologist or construction monitor will check under all equipment for wildlife before use. If any special-status wildlife is observed under equipment or within the work area, the approved biologist will be permitted to handle and relocate it.</p> <p>C. At the end of each work day, excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.</p> <p>D. All trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site disturbance, vegetation removal and throughout construction and grading as specified in measure.
<b>BIO-8</b>	Impacts to special status species.	To minimize take of CRLF during maintenance activities, restrict mowing and pruning to the dry season, after April 15 if feasible, or wait at least 2 weeks after March or April rains.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During site maintenance as specified in measure.
<b>BIO-9</b>	Impacts to special status species.	To minimize vehicle strikes of CRLF, if feasible, restrict parking to daytime hours.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During construction.
<b>BIO-10</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>San Francisco Dusky-Footed Woodrat Pre-construction Survey.</i> Prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for woodrat houses, and clearly flag all houses within the construction impact area and immediate surroundings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The construction contractor shall avoid woodrat houses to the extent feasible by installing a minimum 10-foot (preferably 25-foot) buffer with silt fencing or other material that shall prohibit encroachment.</li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to County Planning Department	Prior to site disturbance

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If this buffer and avoidance is not feasible, the qualified biologist shall allow encroachment into the buffer, but preserve microhabitat conditions such as shade, cover and adjacent food sources.</li> <li>If avoidance of woodrat houses is not possible, in coordination with CDFW, a qualified biologist shall develop and implement a San Francisco Dusky-footed Wood rat Relocation Plan.</li> </ul>			
<b>BIO-11</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Bat Protection Measures.</i> If feasible conduct limbing/tree removal operations between September 15 and November 1 to avoid bat maternity roosts and winter hibernacula, as well as other sensitive biological resources.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	Prior to tree limbing or removal between November 1 and September 15
<b>BIO-12</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Bat Protection Measures.</i> To avoid impacts to individual roosts, winter hibernacula, and maternity roosts, during all months, prior to limbing/tree removal, or rehabilitation of the steel barn a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for bats to determine if crevice or foliage roosting bats are present, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A qualified biologist shall determine if bats are utilizing the site for roosting. For any buildings or trees/snags that could provide roosting space for cavity or foliage-roosting bats, potential bat roost features shall be thoroughly evaluated to determine if bats are present. Visual inspection and/or acoustic surveys shall be utilized as initial techniques.</li> <li>If roosting bats are found, the biologist shall develop and implement acceptable passive exclusion methods in coordination with or based on CDFW recommendations. If feasible, exclusion shall take place during the appropriate windows (September and November 1) to avoid harming bat maternity roosts and/or winter hibernacula. (Authorization from CDFW is required to evict winter hibernacula for bats).</li> <li>If established maternity colonies are found, in coordination with CDFW, a buffer shall be established around the colony to protect pre-volant young from construction disturbances until the young can fly; or implement other measures acceptable to CDFW.</li> <li>If a building or tree is determined not to be an active roost site for roosting bats, proceed with work immediately. For trees to be limbed or removed, proceed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If foliage roosting bats are determined to be present (e.g. hoary bat or western red bat), limbs shall be lowered, inspected for bats by a bat biologist, and chipped immediately or moved to a dump site. Alternately, limbs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to tree limbing or removal or construction as specified in measure

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<p>may be lowered and left on the ground until the following day, when they can be chipped or moved to a dump site. No logs or tree sections shall be dropped on downed limbs or limb piles that have not been in place since the previous day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ If the tree is not limbed or removed within four days of the survey, the survey efforts shall be repeated.</li> </ul>			
<b>BIO-13</b>	Impacts to special status species and nesting birds.	<p><i>Nesting Birds.</i> The avian breeding season occurs between February 1 and September 1. If feasible, perform vegetation removal activities outside of breeding bird season to avoid direct harm or mortality to potential nesting bird species and other sensitive biological resources. For all project activities initiated during the breeding bird season, or if construction activities lapse for a period of one weeks or more during breeding bird season, a qualified biologist will conduct a breeding bird survey for nesting birds, including raptors. The survey will include potential habitat for raptors and sensitive and common nesting avian species known to occur within the Study Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys will be conducted within 7 days, prior to beginning construction activities and will include all work, staging, access areas, and minimum survey radii surrounding the work area as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ 250 feet for non-raptors;</li> <li>♦ 500 feet for small raptors such as accipiters; and</li> <li>♦ 1,000 feet for larger raptors such as buteos.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If no nesting sensitive or common avian species are observed during breeding bird surveys no additional measures would be required.</li> <li>• If common nesting birds are observed within or adjacent to vegetation proposed for removal, postpone vegetation removal activities until young have fledged to avoid direct harm or mortality of nesting birds and/or establish buffers depending on the activity and appropriate to the species.</li> <li>• Sensitive bird species, if nesting in or near the Project Area, will be given special consideration and may require additional protective measures as determined through consultation with the relevant agency (USFWS or CDFW): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Bald eagle, golden eagle: 1,300 feet;</li> <li>♦ Northern harrier, white-tailed kite, and other raptors: 300 feet;</li> <li>♦ Lawrence's goldfinch, grasshopper sparrow, yellow warbler: 75 feet; and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to vegetation removal and site disturbance as specified in measure



No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Oak titmouse, olive-sided flycatcher: 50 feet.</li> </ul> <p>A qualified biologist will monitor active nest sites for construction-related disturbances and adjust protective buffers as necessary to prevent further disruption of nesting activities.</p>			
<b>BIO-14</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Sensitive Bird Species.</i> The following measures will be implemented as Best Management Practices to protect wintering sensitive bird species, if present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If any work is performed during the burrowing owl and tricolored blackbird wintering period (November - March), conduct a survey for these species.</li> <li>• The survey will be conducted by a qualified biologist and include the project area and suitable habitat within 150 meters (490 feet).</li> <li>• If burrowing owls are detected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Place visible markers near occupied burrows and fence off suitable habitat;</li> <li>♦ Avoid direct destruction of burrows, and</li> <li>♦ Include the burrowing owl in the environmental training for construction personnel</li> <li>♦ To avoid potential burrowing owl habitat, to the greatest extent feasible, avoid destruction of fossorial mammal burrows during construction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CDFW may require additional protective measures for wintering tricolored blackbirds, if observed.</li> </ul>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist	Include measure as project COA. Survey to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to vegetation removal and site disturbance as specified in measure
<b>BIO-15</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Control Lighting.</i> To reduce potential impacts to sensitive habitats and special-status species that may result from artificial light, the following shall be adhered to:</p> <p>A. The project shall avoid the installation of any non-essential artificial lighting. If artificial lighting is necessary, the project shall avoid or limit the use of artificial lights during the hours of dawn and dusk, when many wildlife species are most active.</p> <p>B. All essential outdoor lighting shall be limited through the use of timers and/or motion sensors.</p> <p>C. All essential outdoor lighting shall be shielded, cast downward, and directed such that it does not shine off the property into surrounding areas, other parcels, or the night sky.</p>	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During construction and project operations
<b>BIO-16</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<p><i>Special Status Species Encountered During Construction.</i> If any individual special-status species is found at any time prior to or during construction, work shall cease immediately in the vicinity of the individual and likely to be injured or killed by work activities, it</p>	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County	During construction

No.	Environmental Impacts	Mitigation Measures	Responsibility for Compliance	Method of Compliance	Timing of Compliance
		shall either be allowed to move out of harm's way on its own or a qualified biologist, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, shall move it to the nearest suitable habitat outside of the project impact area. The biologist shall be allowed enough time to move any special-status species from the site before work activities begin.	obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Planning Department.	
<b>BIO-17</b>	Impacts to special status species.	<i>Western Pond Turtle Discovery.</i> If a western pond turtle egg clutch is discovered during pre-construction surveys, or at any time during construction, work in the vicinity of the egg clutch shall be halted immediately. Unless otherwise advised by CDFW, the nest location shall be surrounded with high visibility fencing under the guidance of a qualified biologist and shall be avoided until the biologist determines that the clutch has hatched and individuals are no longer likely to be injured by work activities.	Applicant responsible for hiring qualified biologist and obtaining agency approval, if needed, as specified in measure	Include measure as project COA. Compliance monitored by the County Planning Department.	During pre-construction surveys, site disturbance and construction
<b>BIO-18</b>	Impacts to sensitive habitats.	<i>Sensitive Habitat Replacement.</i> To comply with Santa Cruz County General Plan Policy 5.1.12, SCCC Section 16.32.090 (C)(1)(a), and to compensate for impacts to Coastal Scrub, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Mixed Willow Riparian, Seasonal Wetlands, Freshwater Marsh, and Aquatic Habitat (Hanson Slough) and inadvertent impacts that will result from future use of the project site, the following shall be adhered to: A. All areas temporarily disturbed as a result of the project shall be restored to pre-project contours to the maximum extent possible and re-vegetated with native plant species appropriate to the habitat disturbed. B. All sensitive habitats permanently impacted as a result of the project shall be compensated for at a minimum 2:1 ratio through restoration or establishment of in-kind habitat at designated restoration areas on site. C. A Habitat Restoration Plan prepared by a qualified biologist or restoration specialist shall be submitted to, and approved by, the County Environmental Coordinator prior to the final CEQA determination.	Applicant	Include measure as project COA. Habitat Restoration Plan to be submitted to the County Planning Department.	Prior to site disturbance for preparation of the Habitat Restoration Plan with implementation after construction in accordance with provisions of the Plan

## Conditions of Approval

In order to conduct development activities on APNs 052-081-34, 052-081-35, and 052-081-37 the Conditions of Approval I-XI below shall be adhered to. These Conditions shall be incorporated into all phases of development for this project (231264). Adherence to these conditions will ensure that proposed development is consistent with County policies and will reduce impacts to sensitive habitats and special-status species.

- I. To reduce potential impacts to sensitive habitats and special-status species that may result from artificial light, the following shall be adhered to:
  - A. The project shall avoid the installation of any non-essential artificial lighting. If artificial lighting is necessary, the project shall avoid or limit the use of artificial lights during the hours of dawn and dusk, when many wildlife species are most active.
  - B. All essential outdoor lighting shall be limited through the use of timers and/or motion sensors.
  - C. All essential outdoor lighting shall be shielded, cast downward, and directed such that it does not shine off the property into surrounding areas, other parcels, or the night sky.
- II. Prior to any site disturbance, a pre-construction meeting shall be conducted. The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure that the biotic Conditions of Approval are communicated to the various parties responsible for constructing the project. The meeting shall involve all relevant parties including the project proponent, construction supervisor, Environmental Planning Staff, and the project biologist.
- III. Prior to commencement of any vegetation removal (including clearing and grubbing), a qualified biologist shall survey the project disturbance area to identify the presence of any special-status species.
- IV. If any individual special-status species is found at any time prior to or during construction, work shall cease immediately in the vicinity of the individual and likely to be injured or killed by work activities, it shall either be allowed to move out of harm's way on its own or a qualified biologist, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, shall move it to the nearest suitable habitat outside of the project impact area. The biologist shall be allowed enough time to move any special-status species from the site before work activities begin.
- V. If a western pond turtle egg clutch is discovered during pre-construction surveys, or at any time during construction, work in the vicinity of the egg clutch shall be halted immediately. Unless otherwise advised by CDFW, the nest location shall be surrounded with high visibility fencing under the guidance of a qualified biologist and shall be avoided until the biologist determines that the clutch has hatched and individuals are no longer likely to be injured by work activities.
- VI. Prior to commencement of construction, high visibility fencing and/or flagging shall be installed with the assistance of a qualified biologist to indicate the limits of work and prevent inadvertent grading or other disturbance within the adjacent sensitive habitat areas.

- A. No work-related activity including equipment staging, vehicular access, grading and/or vegetation removal shall be allowed outside the designated limits of work.
  - B. Native trees to be retained near or within the project impact area shall be identified, protected with high visibility fencing at or outside of the dripline, and avoided during construction as sensitive habitat unless additional protection measures, provided by a qualified arborist, have been reviewed and approval by Environmental Planning Staff.
  - C. The fencing shall be inspected and maintained daily until project completion.
- VII. A qualified USFWS-approved biologist shall be on site to monitor all initial clearing and grubbing and ground-disturbing activities associated with the project.
- A. A single person on the jobsite (either the qualified biologist or a designated daily monitor) shall be responsible for daily monitoring activities which shall include:
    - 1. Checking under all equipment for wildlife before use.
    - 2. Inspecting all trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.
    - 3. Ensuring that at the end of each workday, all excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.
- VIII. Prior to commencement of construction every individual working on the Project must attend biological awareness training by a qualified biologist prior to working on the job site (also see Condition X B below). The training shall include at minimum information regarding the following:
- A. Location and identification of sensitive habitats and all special-status species with potential to occur in the project area including information specific to identifying these species.
  - B. The importance of avoiding impacts to special-status species and their habitat, penalties for damaging habitat, and the steps necessary if any special-status species is encountered at any time.
  - C. Best management practices to be implemented, identification of the limits of work, and project-specific avoidance measures and permit conditions that must be followed.
- IX. The property owner is responsible for obtaining and complying with all necessary approvals and permits from the appropriate regulatory agencies which may include: the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- X. To avoid and minimize impacts to protected wildlife species the following Recommended Measures outlined in the attached Biotic Assessment Report dated May 2023 (Updated February 2024), prepared by EcoSystems West Consulting Group shall be adhered to unless otherwise directed through Consultation with CDFW and/or USFWS:

- A. Prior to initiation of construction activities, a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist shall identify areas to be protected with exclusion fencing, and all areas requiring monitoring by a USFWS- and CDFW-approved biologist.
- B. Prior to initiation of construction activities, a USFWS-approved biologist shall conduct an environmental training for all construction personnel. The training shall include a description of CRLF and its habitat, and measures to protect CRLF, and other sensitive wildlife species known or with potential to occur (WPT, nesting avian species, SF dusky-footed wood rat, and roosting bats) in the Study Area.
- C. Prior to initiation of construction activities, the construction contractor shall install exclusion fencing (solid silt fencing) in specified areas along the work area boundaries, 6 inches below grade and 3.0 feet above grade, with wooden stakes at intervals of not more than 12 feet. The fence shall be maintained in working order for the duration of construction activities.
  - The USFWS-approved biologist or designated trained construction monitor shall inspect the fence daily and notify the construction foreman when fence maintenance is required.
  - The fence shall allow for wildlife passage across the work area at intervals to be determined in conjunction with USFWS and CDFW.
- D. If feasible, construction activities in and adjacent to the sloughs shall take place during the dry season and before the first rain of the season, especially vegetation removal. Avoid working at night or during rain events when special-status amphibians and mammals are generally more active. Consult weather forecasts from the National Weather Service at least 72 hours prior to performing work.
- E. During vegetation removal in or adjacent to the sloughs, with the authorization of the USFWS and CDFW, the agency-approved biologist will be present (or on call) to relocate CRLF (and WPT) as needed. The approved biologist shall have the authority to stop work that may result in the "take" of a special-status species. The biologist will thoroughly check all vegetation for CRLF, WPT, and other wildlife species prior to vegetation removal activities.
- F. The approved biologist or construction monitor will check under all equipment for wildlife before use. If any special-status wildlife is observed under equipment or within the work area, the approved biologist will be permitted to handle and relocate it.
- G. At the end of each work day, excavations shall be secured with a cover, or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife entrapment.
- H. All trenches, pipes, culverts or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.
- I. To minimize take of CRLF during maintenance activities, restrict mowing and pruning to the dry season, after April 15 if feasible, or wait at least 2 weeks after March or April rains.

- J. To minimize vehicle strikes of CRLF, if feasible, restrict parking to daytime hours.
- K. The avian breeding season occurs between February 1 and September 1. If feasible, perform vegetation removal activities outside of breeding bird season to avoid direct harm or mortality to potential nesting bird species and other sensitive biological resources.
- L. For all project activities initiated during the breeding bird season, or if construction activities lapse for a period of one weeks or more during breeding bird season, a qualified biologist will conduct a breeding bird survey for nesting birds, including raptors. The survey will include potential habitat for raptors and sensitive and common nesting avian species known to occur within the Study Area.
- Surveys will be conducted within 7 days, prior to beginning construction activities and will include all work, staging, access areas, and minimum survey radii surrounding the work area as follows:
    - 250 feet for non-raptors;
    - 500 feet for small raptors such as accipiters; and
    - 1,000 feet for larger raptors such as buteos.
  - If no nesting sensitive or common avian species are observed during breeding bird surveys no additional measures would be required.
  - If common nesting birds are observed within or adjacent to vegetation proposed for removal, postpone vegetation removal activities until young have fledged to avoid direct harm or mortality of nesting birds and/or establish buffers depending on the activity and appropriate to the species.
  - Sensitive bird species, if nesting in or near the Project Area, will be given special consideration and may require additional protective measures as determined through consultation with the relevant agency (USFWS or CDFW):
    - Bald eagle, golden eagle: 1,300 feet;
    - Northern harrier, white-tailed kite, and other raptors: 300 feet;
    - Lawrence's goldfinch, grasshopper sparrow, yellow warbler: 75 feet; and
    - Oak titmouse, olive-sided flycatcher: 50 feet.
- A qualified biologist will monitor active nest sites for construction-related disturbances and adjust protective buffers as necessary to prevent further disruption of nesting activities.
- M. The following measures will be implemented as Best Management Practices to protect wintering sensitive bird species, if present:
- If any work is performed during the burrowing owl and tricolored blackbird wintering period (November - March), conduct a survey for these species.

- The survey will be conducted by a qualified biologist and include the project area and suitable habitat within 150 meters (490 feet).
  - If burrowing owls are detected:
    - Place visible markers near occupied burrows and fence off suitable habitat;
    - Avoid direct destruction of burrows, and
    - Include the burrowing owl in the environmental training for construction personnel
    - To avoid potential burrowing owl habitat, to the greatest extent feasible, avoid destruction of
  - CDFW may require additional protective measures for wintering tricolored blackbirds, if observed.
- N. Prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for woodrat houses, and clearly flag all houses within the construction impact area and immediate surroundings.
- The construction contractor shall avoid woodrat houses to the extent feasible by installing a minimum 10-foot (preferably 25-foot) buffer with silt fencing or other material that shall prohibit encroachment.
  - If this buffer and avoidance is not feasible, the qualified biologist shall allow encroachment into the buffer, but preserve microhabitat conditions such as shade, cover and adjacent food sources.
  - If avoidance of woodrat houses is not possible, in coordination with CDFW, a qualified biologist shall develop and implement a San Francisco Dusky-footed Wood rat Relocation Plan.
- O. If feasible conduct limbing/tree removal operations between September 15 and November 1 to avoid bat maternity roosts and winter hibernacula, as well as other sensitive biological resources.
- P. To avoid impacts to individual roosts, winter hibernacula, and maternity roosts, during all months, prior to limbing/tree removal, or rehabilitation of the steel barn a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for bats to determine if crevice or foliage roosting bats are present, as follows:
- A qualified biologist shall determine if bats are utilizing the site for roosting. For any buildings or trees/snags that could provide roosting space for cavity or foliage-roosting bats, potential bat roost features shall be thoroughly evaluated to determine if bats are present. Visual inspection and/or acoustic surveys shall be utilized as initial techniques.

- If roosting bats are found, the biologist shall develop and implement acceptable passive exclusion methods in coordination with or based on CDFW recommendations. If feasible, exclusion shall take place during the appropriate windows (September and November 1) to avoid harming bat maternity roosts and/or winter hibernacula. (Authorization from CDFW is required to evict winter hibernacula for bats).
- If established maternity colonies are found, in coordination with CDFW, a buffer shall be established around the colony to protect pre-volant young from construction disturbances until the young can fly; or implement other measures acceptable to CDFW.
- If a building or tree is determined not to be an active roost site for roosting bats, proceed with work immediately. For trees to be limbed or removed, proceed as follows:
  - If foliage roosting bats are determined to be present (e.g. hoary bat or western red bat), limbs shall be lowered, inspected for bats by a bat biologist, and chipped immediately or moved to a dump site. Alternately, limbs may be lowered and left on the ground until the following day, when they can be chipped or moved to a dump site. No logs or tree sections shall be dropped on downed limbs or limb piles that have not been in place since the previous day.
  - If the tree is not limbed or removed within four days of the survey, the survey efforts shall be repeated.

- XI. To comply with Santa Cruz County General Plan Policy 5.1.12, SCCC Section 16.32.090 (C)(1)(a), and to compensate for impacts to Coastal Scrub, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Mixed Willow Riparian, Seasonal Wetlands, Freshwater Marsh, and Aquatic Habitat (Hanson Slough) and inadvertent impacts that will result from future use of the project site, the following shall be adhered to:
- A. All areas temporarily disturbed as a result of the project shall be restored to pre-project contours to the maximum extent possible and re-vegetated with native plant species appropriate to the habitat disturbed.
  - B. All sensitive habitats permanently impacted as a result of the project shall be compensated for at a minimum 2:1 ratio through restoration or establishment of in-kind habitat at designated restoration areas on site.
  - C. A Habitat Restoration Plan prepared by a qualified biologist or restoration specialist shall be submitted to, and approved by, the County Environmental Coordinator prior to the final CEQA determination.



The Habitat Restoration Plan shall be focused on restoring/establishing native plant structure and species composition of native habitat that was disturbed as a result of this project and must include the following minimum elements:

- A map of all designated restoration areas on site identifying:
  - Locations where temporary disturbance and re-establishment of native habitat shall occur pursuant to Condition XI.A.
  - Locations designated for restoration or establishment of native habitat intended to compensate for permanently impacted sensitive habitats at 2:1 ratio as required in Condition XI.B.
- A planting plan with species, size, and locations of all restoration plantings needed to establish native plant structure and species composition of the habitats being restored. These plantings shall occur at sizes and ratios determined by the restoration specialist to adequately establish native habitat while maximizing plant health and survivability of individual plants.
- Plan for removal of non-native species on the parcel and a management strategy to control re-establishment of invasive non-native species in restored areas.
- Information regarding the methods for restoration and invasive plant removal including protective measures for special-status species.
- Information regarding the methods of irrigation for restoration plantings.
- A plan for implementation of the Habitat Restoration Plan including establishment and planting of all restoration areas that coincides with the phased approach of project implementation. All completed restoration areas shall be inspected and approved by Environmental Planning staff.
- Any seed mix used for erosion control purposes on temporarily impacted areas and exposed soils shall be limited to seeds of native species common to the surrounding habitat and/or sterile seeds.
- A 5-year Management Plan for maintenance and monitoring of restored areas, including a proposed mechanism for evaluating success. Annual reports outlining the progress and success of the restoration and monitoring shall be submitted to the County Restoration Coordinator ([restoration.coordinator@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:restoration.coordinator@santacruzcountyca.gov)) by December 31 of each monitoring year.

# **Project Plans**

(Project Plans available online at: [cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov](http://cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov))

## **Application Number 231264 Zoning Administrator Staff Report**

## Parcel Information

### Services Information

Urban/Rural Services Line: ☐ Inside ☒ Outside  
Water Supply: Well  
Sewage Disposal: Septic  
Fire District: CalFire (County Fire Department)  
Drainage District: Zone 7 - Flood Control District

### Parcel Information

Parcel Size: 490 acres  
Existing Land Use - Parcel: Agriculture  
Existing Land Use - Surrounding: Agriculture, Wetlands  
Project Access: Lee Road  
Planning Area: San Andreas  
Land Use Designation: A (Agriculture)  
Zone District: CA (Commercial Agriculture)  
Coastal Zone: ☒ Inside ☐ Outside  
Appealable to Calif. Coastal Comm.: ☒ Yes ☐ No

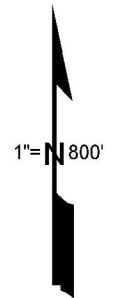
**Technical Reviews:** Biotic Report Review (REV231100), Soils Report Review (REV231101)

### Environmental Information

An Initial Study has been prepared (Exhibit H) that addresses the environmental review associated with this application.

THE ASSESSOR MAKES NO GUARANTEE AS TO MAP ACCURACY NOR ASSUMES ANY  
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52-08

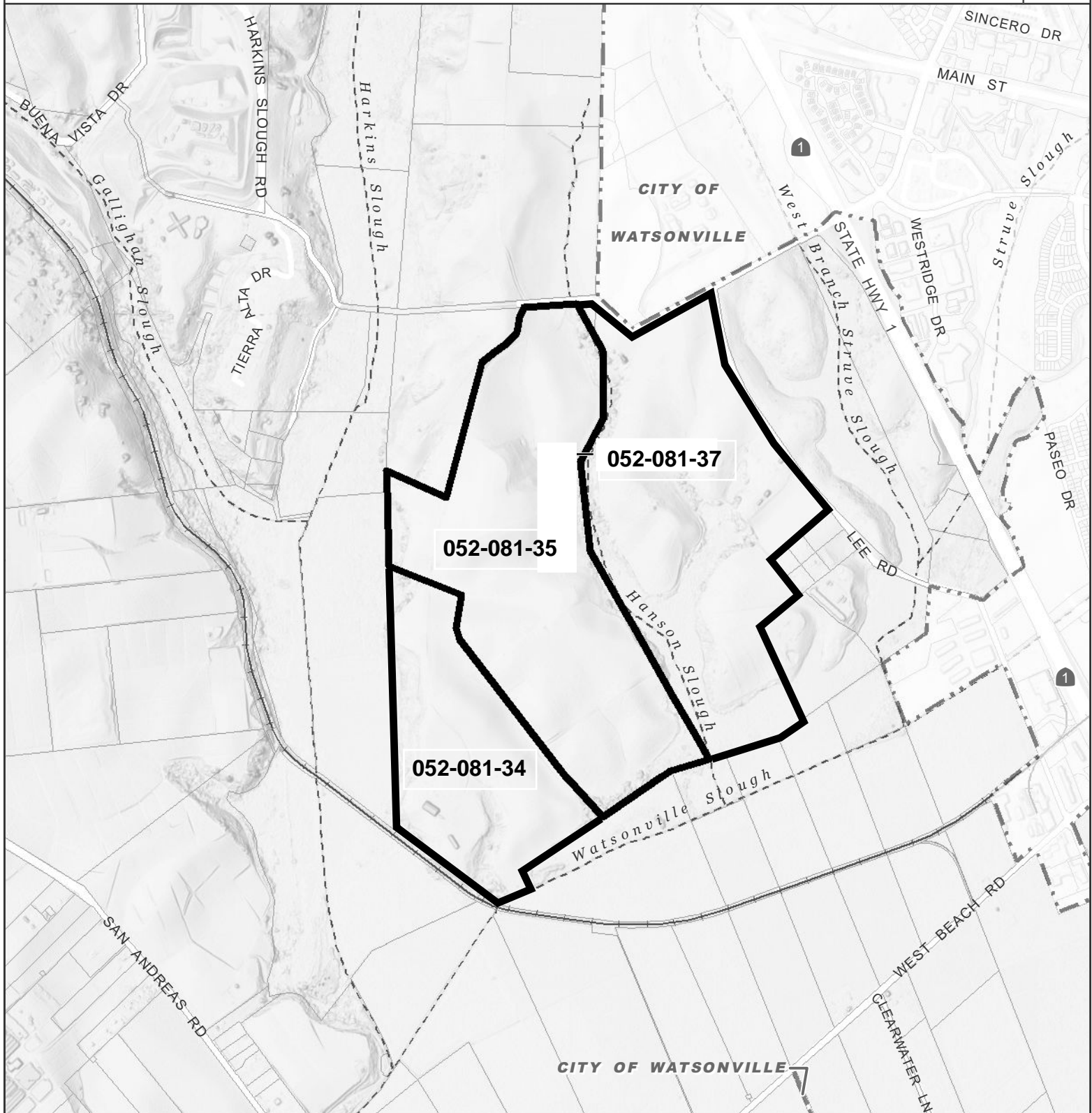


Electronically drawn 11/13/95 KSA  
Rev. 1/8/97 GG (Corr. APN 14, 39 & PG Ref.)  
Rev. 6/2/98 (TCA CONSOLIDATION) rw  
Rev. 6/12/01 mvm (changed page refs.)  
Rev. 5/31/07 td (Par. of 52-10)

**EXHIBIT F**  
Assessor's Map No. 52-08  
County of Santa Cruz, Calif.  
Aug. 1951



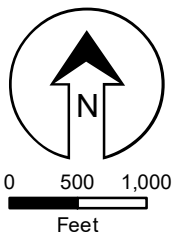
# Parcel Location Map



**Parcel: 05208135**

- Study Parcel
- City Limits
- Assessor Parcel Boundary
- Existing Park

Map printed: 17 Jun. 2024

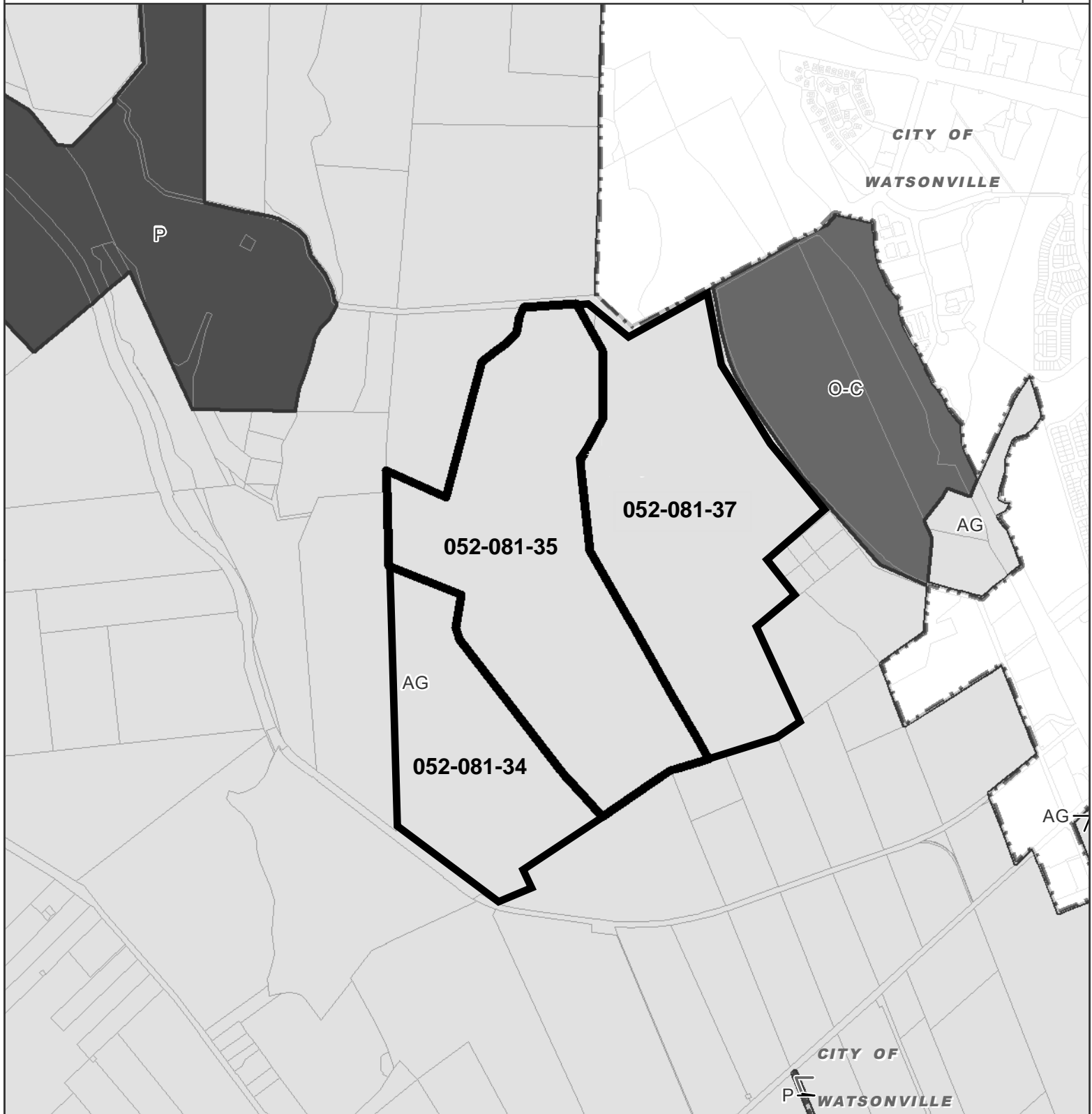




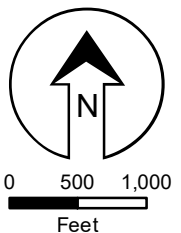
# Parcel General Plan Map



Mapped  
Area



- AG Agricultural
- O-C Resource Conservation
- P Public Facilities





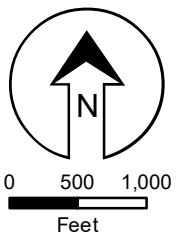
# Parcel Zoning Map



Mapped  
Area



-  A Agriculture
-  CA Commercial Agriculture
-  PF Public/Community Facilities
-  PR Parks, Recreation, & Open Space
-  SU Special Use



**Staff Report to the Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission  
(from 8/15/24 Public Hearing)**

(Staff Report to APAC available online at: [cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov](https://cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov))

**Application Number 231264  
Zoning Administrator Staff Report**



# **Initial Study**

(Initial Study and Attachments available online at: [cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov](http://cdi.santacruzcountyca.gov))

## **Application Number 231264 Zoning Administrator Staff Report**



# WATSONVILLE SLOUGH FARM COMMUNITY HARVEST PROGRAM STATEMENT

LAND TRUST OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

May 1, 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

This document lays out a vision and program features for the “Community Harvest” program at the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County’s Watsonville Slough Farm property. The purpose of this document is to characterize the uses that are subject to regulatory review, describe the built elements proposed to support those uses, and to describe operational elements planned to avoid or minimize impacts to agricultural and natural resources. Other considerations, such as the phasing of implementation or details of operations, will be developed in a manner consistent with commercial agricultural operations at the time.

### COMMUNITY HARVEST

Throughout Santa Cruz County, farmers and agricultural landowners are taking advantage of the growing market for ‘Consumer Harvest’, a principal permitted land use for commercial agricultural land such as Watsonville Slough Farm, to connect to new customers, grow their business and meet their program goals. More and more people want to connect with the food that ends up on their dining room table. They want to know where their food is grown, form relationships with their farmers, shop for locally sourced products, or go directly to the source and harvest crops themselves. There is a steady growth in the demand for Community Supported Agriculture, where customers sign up for a regular “food share” from one or a collection of local farms, and “U-pick” programs, where consumers pick their own produce and pay farmers onsite.

The Land Trust plans to leverage this growing desire for a closer relationship to our food by inviting people to our Watsonville Slough Farm to harvest our bounty themselves. At the Land Trust, one of the core elements of our mission is to connect people to the land that makes Santa Cruz County special. We believe that through adequate planning and best management practices the public and the commercial farmer can both benefit from a more community-based agricultural model. We refer to the program as “Community Harvest” because the primary goal for this program is to increase access to and understanding about healthy food and our target audience is largely





members of the local community.

This is a long-term initiative with specific goals and identified milestones. However, as a working ranch, we recognize that the property is a dynamic place, and the program is likely to adapt over time as site conditions, farmer practices, community partnerships and other factors change. Our intent is to anticipate the needs of the ranch, our farmers and the programming by building the facilities that can best serve the potential uses in the future.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND NEED

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While recently engaging with the community in an extensive public outreach effort during 2020, we learned that access to healthy food is a priority for many, alongside participating in the production and harvesting of healthy food for personal consumption.

We know from our public outreach that food security is a concern in the community near the ranch. Food security is defined by the USDA as “a situation in which all people at all times have access to adequate quantities of safe and nutritious food to lead a healthy and active life.” The Watsonville community meets the low-income and low-access thresholds of a food desert as defined by the USDA. This means at least 33% of the population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. Limited access to healthy, affordable food choices often leads to poor diets and high levels of diet-related diseases, including diabetes and heart disease. Watsonville Slough Farm is within ½ mile of the residences in northwest Watsonville making it a short drive, bike ride or walk for many area residents and a viable source of fresh, healthy food for the community to easily access. The Land Trust sees Watsonville Slough Farm as a small part of the solution to the problem of food insecurity in this community.

## WATSONVILLE SLOUGH FARM OVERVIEW

### HISTORY

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The Land Trust acquired Watsonville Slough Farm in 2010 for \$12 million with the support of 10 partner organizations and funding from the State Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The property is now managed to advance the Land Trust’s goals of preserving agricultural land, restoring coastal ecosystems, and connecting people with nature. We evaluate our return on this investment using a triple bottom line. We consider revenue generation, environmental sustainability, and how our operations affect community health. We lease blocks of cropland to professional growers that sell to local and national markets and donate to local food aid programs. We reinvest the lease proceeds in land conservation, habitat restoration, and other public benefit purposes that advance the mission of the Land Trust. Since acquisition, we have reinvested approximately \$3 million in upgrading agricultural infrastructure and restoring natural habitats on the property.



Our goals include advancing the economic and environmental sustainability of agricultural lands in the County. Sustaining the viability of agricultural operations is a top priority for this property. The ranch produces enough food to provide about 90,000 servings of vegetables a day and supports about 100 jobs. Demonstrating agricultural sustainability is another priority. We have replaced thousands of feet of leaking irrigation pipelines, upgraded wells, and constructed four stormwater sediment basins, 14 acres of native grassland filters, and eight restored breeding areas for California red-legged frogs.





We forgo some lease revenue to dedicate a portion of the ranch to producing healthy food at reduced cost for economically disadvantaged community members through our partnership with Esperanza Community Farms, a local non-profit food-justice organization that provides free and low-cost produce deliveries to local families in need. We host occasional events for community members to visit the ranch to learn about the Land Trust's management practices, organic agriculture, and the important and unique slough ecosystem. During those visits, there are ample opportunities to appreciate the natural beauty of the farm and the interplay between wildlife habitat and commercial agriculture.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

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Watsonville Slough Farm is located at 275 Lee Road in the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County adjacent to the city limits of Watsonville - APN 052-081-34, 052-081-35, 052-081-37. The farm hosts 10 acres of hardscaping and disturbed land associated with former residences and outbuildings, 243 acres of wetland, grassland, forest and agricultural fields retired for sustainability reasons, and 237 acres presently in agricultural production. Among the acreage leased for production, a few fields are less productive in quality due to steep slopes, soil pathogens, and loss of fertility. Despite extensive efforts to restore productivity and marketing to prospective tenants, these agricultural blocks have not been successfully leased for multiple years. Residential and other buildings that were located near the Lee Road entrance were removed in 2019 with a County demolition permit, but the utilities (water, septic, power) were retained at multiple locations. The property is adjacent to the Pajaro Valley High School campus and is one-half mile from the homes and businesses in the northern part of the City of Watsonville.

*A winter cover crop of mustard rejuvenates the soil at Watsonville Slough Farm*





## VISION

We envision a place where our guests, from local families to far flung visitors, may harvest fruits and vegetables for their own consumption while learning about healthy food and healthy land. Our guests will visit designated harvest areas and gather food in season. Guests could enjoy food that they harvest on the property and have the opportunity to observe nearby habitats that are vibrant as a result of sustainable agricultural practices on the ranch.

Through this program, the Land Trust will also be able to build awareness about the unique farmland of Santa Cruz County, the economic and environmental sustainability of these lands, and the importance of conserving them. Informed consumers will observe the cycles of crop production and nature, and harvest food as it ripens throughout the year in our coastal Mediterranean climate. Community Harvest events will highlight the success of the sustainable and health-oriented agricultural practices that the Land Trust implements through our management of the property.

## PROGRAM STATEMENT

### COMMUNITY HARVEST AREAS

The Land Trust will establish Community Harvest Areas, agricultural growing areas located strategically on the property to limit impacts to the commercial growing areas. These areas will take advantage of less productive agricultural fields and provide the best access for visitors to harvest. Community harvest areas will generally be established in unleased areas such as the former residential area off Lee Road, retired farm fields and along ranch roads. These areas will be planted with crops such as orchard trees, berry bushes, *nopales*, flowers and perennial herbs as well as some row crops as grower operations allow. These plantings may be operated by a commercial grower, staff, volunteers, or some combination thereof. Community harvest may also be offered in parts of less productive fields and in highly productive fields where commercial growers are interested in the market opportunity. These designated areas will typically be planted with vegetables or fruit in collaboration with a commercial grower or other expert.

Plants that are culturally significant for the Native American community may also be grown in appropriate areas. At some point integrated animal agriculture (ley farming), agroforestry or silvopasture practices may be considered as showcases for innovative agricultural practices that stress biodiversity, food crop sustainability and healthy ecosystems.

Community harvest areas will be placed in various parts of the ranch to match crops with appropriate soils, microclimate, and operational considerations. Since operational considerations may vary from year to year, community harvest areas will change over time. As conditions change or new factors arise, the locations and crop types for community harvest will also be adapted to meet the needs and preferences of our professional growers, community members and land managers.

Examples of Community Harvest Areas are shown on the attached map (Exhibit A). Areas will be planted and opened to Community Harvest activities as determined by the capacity of Land Trust staff, volunteers, partner organizations or farm lessees to manage the growing areas. Some ideal growing areas





are described below.

#### Area 1: Gateway Field 1

An area around the Gateway entrance to the property on Lee Road adjacent to the proposed parking area, ADA pathways and farm stand and nearby to the proposed restroom facilities and barn rebuild. Optimal for a community garden and community orchard space.

#### Area 2: Gateway Field 2

An area around the Gateway entrance to the property on Lee Road near the proposed parking area, ADA pathways and farm stand and adjacent to the proposed restroom facilities and barn rebuild. Optimal for a community garden and community orchard space.

#### Area 3: Chivos Field

An area approximately 1/8 mile from the Community Harvest Gateway entrance. Ideal for orchard trees, nopales or berry canes.

#### Area 4: Cypress Hilltop Field

An area adjacent to the proposed single stall restroom and picnic structure that could be planted in a small orchard.

#### Area 5: Hanson Slough Block 1

This area is steep and adjacent to a road and could be planted with some edible hedgerow such as Pineapple Guava or Pomegranate.

#### Area 6: Hanson Slough Block 12

This area is a recently retired farm field that could support any number of different crops from berries to flowers.

#### Area 7: Bee Barn Field

An area that recently served as a native seed production facility and greenhouse. The site is very level and has been tilled in the recent past. Ideal for flower growing, small diverse row crop operation or perennial crop installation.



#### Area 8: Harkins Slough Block 9

This area is a less productive field currently under lease that could be converted to a Community Harvest area. The area has been cultivated in strawberries, tomatoes and greens in the recent past.

### TARGET AUDIENCE AND HOURS OF OPERATION

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The community we aim to serve includes those who live near the ranch in Watsonville and surrounding communities. We will strive to define 'guests' as broadly as possible. To the extent feasible, this initiative will provide access to the general public, including all people who visit in a respectful manner, and whose visitation





can be effectively managed by our staff and volunteer caretakers. When resources are limited, priority will be provided to school groups, health partners, and land trust members.

The hours, days, and seasons of operation at each portion of the ranch will be determined based on harvest timing, the capacity of the Land Trust to manage visitors, commercial agricultural operations, and habitat management activities underway at the time, as well as other considerations for safety, property operations and resource protection. In determining when the ranch is open, we will consider both the harvest season and the opportunity to educate the community about the different phases of the production cycle. Considerations related to hours of operation and impacts to wildlife are described below under Design, Maintenance and Operations.

## PROJECT ELEMENTS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

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Community harvest activities and facilities will be centered in two parts of the ranch. The primary location will be at the Community Harvest Gateway, which is accessed off Lee Road. The secondary location will be at the Little Bee Barn, which is presently accessed off Harkins Slough Road and may be accessed from the Rail Trail in the future. With the exception of transportation to the property, and limited exceptions for people with accessibility challenges, all access on the property will be on foot. Recreational activities including dog walking, horseback riding, and bicycle riding will not be allowed as these are incompatible with agricultural operations and stewardship of wildlife habitat.

The designs developed by SSA Landscape Architects and the elements they contain reflect the feedback received from the community about their priorities during our 2020 public outreach efforts and stakeholder interviews. Significant staff research was conducted on considerations for achieving not only a balance between farm operations and Community Harvest programming, but a net benefit and enhancement of the farm programming as a whole in the introduction of an expanded commercial agricultural use.

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### COMMUNITY HARVEST GATEWAY

Most activity will be centered on the Community Harvest Gateway, a 10-acre area with a driveway located at 275 Lee Road, which was formerly occupied by residential uses, and which includes the Cypress Hilltop. Improvements proposed for this area include a farm stand, a small covered gathering space and several picnic areas. The project will include restrooms, which may consist of vault toilets, chemical toilets or flush toilets. Flush toilets, if provided, would use existing septic systems that would be upgraded as required by Santa Cruz County County Environmental Health.



Sufficient parking - approximately 50 spaces - will be provided in previously hardscaped portions of the former residential area.

We anticipate the requirement for electric vehicle charging stations and parking area lighting and have included those in the design. Existing septic systems will be expanded or rebuilt to serve these new uses. The restroom in the core Gateway will see a peak use of approximately 250 uses a day.

The project includes rebuilding an existing 80-foot by 60-foot steel barn located near the Lee Road entrance. The barn is in poor condition and will be rebuilt to include uses such as offices for site managers, including partner organizations in managing community harvest activities, and an operations area for storage of ranch management equipment and materials. The anticipated occupancy of the barn for office workers is 20. The new barn will be located in the same position with a similar footprint of up to 100-feet by 60-feet. Water storage tanks with a combined capacity of approximately 50,000 gallons will be built in the gateway area for



firefighting purposes. If the County code is updated in a manner that allows for events and educational uses at the property, the barn may be used in a manner consistent with the allowed uses. The design for the rebuilt barn will be intended to accommodate those uses when they are allowed, and to support consumer harvest and other ranch operations until that time.

Fencing, gates, and signage will be provided to secure the property when it is not open and enable guests to participate in various programs and activities without affecting the robust production agriculture on the ranch.

Guests will walk on existing roads and paths, including a few new footpaths that require county and regulatory review due to their proximity to riparian and wetland resources. Gates, fencing and vegetated buffers will be used to separate guests from agricultural areas not involved in community harvest. In the Community Harvest Gateway area, we envision an accessible path for guests who face mobility challenges. That path will lead to community harvest areas nearby and to vista points near Hanson Slough.

The Cypress Hilltop, a short walk from the Lee Road entrance, will host a picnic area and restroom. The existing driveway to this location will be improved and gated to provide greater accessibility at the request of guests with mobility challenges.

#### LITTLE BEE BARN

The Little Bee Barn is located at the end of a 1-mile long driveway off Harkins Slough Road and close to the alignment of the Rail Trail. The project will realign the entrance to this part of the property to avoid a steep hill which becomes inaccessible during the rainy season. The new entrance road will connect to the County right-of-way and will require an encroachment permit.



Access to this area by vehicle will be provided for occasional Community Harvest gatherings on the grounds in the vicinity of the barn. Pedestrian access to this area will be provided by walking from the Gateway area through non-cropped areas on existing ranch roads and a few new footpaths. In the future access to this area may be provided by the Rail Trail.

Modest improvements will be made to the entrances at Lee Road and Harkins Slough Road for vehicle circulation and security, including signage, fencing and driveway transitions.

#### SUPPORT AND RELATED FACILITIES

Due to the nature of the property and the habitat of the sloughs, the project includes facilities to enhance wetland habitat for California red-legged frogs that will be combined with facilities for pedestrians crossing the sloughs between Community Harvest areas. Invasive fish screens combined with boardwalks will enhance 10 acres of wetlands for California red-legged frogs and allow guests to traverse from one part of the property to the other without impacting agricultural production. While they take advantage of the various Community Harvest opportunities at the ranch, visitors can benefit from the study and appreciation of nature, observing it thriving in close proximity to agriculture. They will be able to see sustainability with their own eyes.

These facilities will include two invasive fish screens/boardwalks and three observation platforms. They are proposed for areas where it is infeasible to farm. These facilities will require county regulatory review and approval by state and federal agencies due to their proximity to wetland and riparian resources.

The first invasive fish screen/boardwalk will be built over an existing road that is frequently submerged. It will



allow guests to reach the Cypress Hill area during the winter, while avoiding ranch roads that are used by growers or by guests who require vehicle access for accessibility purposes.

The second invasive fish screen/boardwalk will cross another branch of Hanson Slough, which has no alternative crossing on the ranch. A ranch road previously crossed this branch of Hanson Slough, but it was retired over 10 years ago because it was frequently flooded and interfered with wetland hydrology. To enhance wetland habitat, the invasive fish screens/boardwalks will prevent invasive non-native fish from entering the parts of the slough upstream of these structures.

These areas support potential breeding habitat for California red-legged frogs. Although no breeding in these areas has been observed, fish-free wetlands within 2500 feet of these sites support California red-legged frog breeding. Asian carp and mosquito fish occur throughout perennially inundated wetlands in the Watsonville Sloughs, significantly impairing California red-legged frog breeding. The fish screens will prevent fish from moving upstream of the structures. This will create two areas of fish-free wetlands, 1.1 acres and 9.0-acres in extent, when inundation occurs during the winter frog breeding season. The fish screens will also allow the upstream portions of the sloughs to dry down completely in years with average or low rainfall, which will eliminate fish that become established. The structures around the screens will protect them from damage from falling trees and differential settlement, increasing their reliability.



Additionally, a one-acre area next to the second boardwalk will be restored to wetland habitat by removing soil inadvertently deposited in this area by decades of farming the steep adjacent hillside.

We are also planning three observation platforms to allow guests to make observations of nature and agriculture side-by-side in different parts of the ranch. These platforms will allow small groups (perhaps five people at a time) to gather near the water's edge without trampling wetland vegetation.

To build a community of educated consumers and a culture of environmental stewardship, we are also planning for signage to provide guests the opportunity to learn about how the food on the ranch was grown, the importance of preserving the world class agricultural lands of Santa Cruz County, and the deliberate land stewardship that allows farming and nature to thrive side by side. All signage will be bilingual.

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### DESIGN, MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The trails and farm roads used for visitor travel will be thoughtfully designed and managed to strike a balance between providing visitors a positive nature experience, while avoiding production agricultural operations and minimizing impacts to sensitive wildlife. Strategies include use designations, hours of operation, trail design, using vegetation for screening, bypass trails to allow for seasonal trail closures, and education.

Trails will be designed and managed for walking. No use by dogs, bikes, motor vehicles, or horses is under consideration, except to accommodate people with disabilities.

The hours of operation will be to open at least 30 minutes after sunrise and to close at least 30 minutes before sunset, to minimize disturbance of wildlife during the early and late hours of the day. Early morning or evening access to trails may be occasionally provided for special events.

Farm roads and natural surface trails used by this program will be regularly maintained to prevent erosion. New natural surface trails will be designed with frequent grade reversals and related design details to



disperse stormwater and prevent erosion. Trail construction and maintenance will avoid the development of over-steepened banks that could impede the cross-slope movement of turtles or other wildlife.

Vegetated buffers will be retained between farm roads and trails used by this program and adjacent wetlands, with the exception of boardwalks and wildlife viewing platforms where the intention is to bring visitors to the water's edge as part of a nature connection and education experience.

Boardwalks and wildlife platforms will be designed for construction using driven piles and/or helical anchors, which avoid excavation and earth moving. The intention is to avoid excavation and the placement of fill dirt in or adjacent to wetlands.

Most roads and trails will be established with a distance of at least 50 feet from the water's edge to reduce the disturbance to wildlife. Where trails are within 50 feet of the water's edge, native vegetation between the trail and the wetland will be allowed to grow in patches along at least half of the trail length to form a screen that will reduce the disturbance of wildlife, principally birds, that occupy the wetlands. Trail layout will include bypass trails so trails located within 50 feet of the water's edge can be seasonally closed to minimize disruption to migratory waterfowl. The response of waterfowl to visitors will be observed, and if the birds do not acclimatize to the presence of people, visitors will be directed to bypass trails during periods when large numbers of migratory waterfowl are present.

Trail layout and construction will avoid tree removal, except where trees are hazardous to visitors or have fallen across a trail alignment. Tree removal will leave branches and roots intact, to the extent feasible, with pruning to direct regrowth away from the trail as needed for visitor safety and comfort.

Existing and proposed trail corridors generally pass through areas of degraded habitats which are dominated by poison hemlock and mustard. Vegetation management associated with trail construction and maintenance will facilitate the conversion of these non-native species to native plants such as blackberry and coyote brush.



Extensive use of interpretive signs is planned to establish a culture of stewardship, educate visitors about sharing the land with wildlife and acting as a steward of the resource.

The trails and facilities will be designed and operated with a 'dark sky' approach to minimize exterior lighting, only illuminating facilities to the minimum requirements of the County Code. Lights will only be used where needed. Illumination will be targeted to specific necessary locations. The intensity of light will be as low as possible while achieving goals of safety and comfort. The lighting colors will be warm. Timers will be used to turn off lights after a certain hour. The design will avoid motion sensors that could be triggered by wildlife.

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## FARMWORKER HOUSING

As a part of facility and operational renovations to the property as described in the program statement, the Land Trust has proposed the construction of a Small Farmworker Housing Development as described in the County Code. The development will include one designated caretaker's quarters and three dwelling units housing no more than 4 total farmworkers and their households. The Land Trust has identified this housing development and establishment of a caretaker's quarters as an essential component of the management of the ranch. We want to provide affordable housing to farmworkers due to substantial ranch operations and



maintenance needs which require on-site presence to manage the property which already experiences elevated levels of impacts due to trespass and vandalism.

The farmworker housing and caretaker site as proposed will be split between two parcels (APN 052-081-34, and 052-081-37) which are considered the same "farm parcel" under the county's implementation of state law. The housing units will be RV trailer-type single bedroom units with wheels and trailer hitch. The developments will be located on a former homesite near the Lee Road entrance and a previously permitted travel trailer site on the west side of the farm. These facilities will repurpose existing hardscaped parking areas, electrical and septic service formerly used for the residences on the site. Fencing, screening, and landscaping will be used to ensure these facilities are aesthetically appealing while still providing the caretakers the ability to overlook the Gateway area.

The Caretaker will be engaged in a full-time role providing work principally for the security needs and/or farming related activities on the ranch. The other residents of the farmworker housing units will be agricultural employees as defined in the County Code. Those residents will be earning their primary income through permanent or seasonal agricultural labor on the property or on property owned or operated by the Land Trust or their growers, as defined in the County Code. In exchange for rent, the residents may work approximately 30% of their normal work hours on ranch-related work trade such as mowing, facilities maintenance and repair, and security services.

The Small Farmworker Housing Development will be approved by the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee, the Santa Cruz County Housing Department and a deed restriction shall be placed upon the property ensuring compliance with the County Code as long as the dwelling units are occupied.

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## FACILITIES SUMMARY

### Community Harvest Gateway and Cypress Hilltop Area (APN 052-081-37)

- Parking area (~50 spaces) including bus drop-off area, vehicle charging stations, lighting, stormwater management structures, sidewalks, pervious concrete walking surfaces
- Redesigned entrance from Lee Road with fence, gate, signage
- Group picnic area with shade structures (1)
- Small picnic pads with single ADA table (~7)
- Accessible trail and new natural surface footpaths
- Some of these may be integrated into a rebuilt barn or may be free standing
  - Equipment storage
  - Farm stand
- Restroom
- Caretaker sites (1)
- Farmworker Housing Site (1)
- Boardwalk 1
- Boardwalk 2
- Observation platform
- Interpretive signage
- Cypress Hilltop ranch overlook with
  - Picnic area
  - Restroom
  - Shade structure
  - Limited accessible road access improvements







## Little Bee Barn Area (APN 052-081-34, 052-081-35)

- Farmworker sites (2)
- Redesigned entrance from Harkins Slough Road with fence, gate, signage
- New footpaths
- Observation platforms (2)

## IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

### PHASE 1

The first phase of the project will be focused on the elements in the Community Harvest Gateway accessed off Lee Road including the parking area, restroom, picnic areas, accessible trail, small farmworker housing development and other visitor serving facilities.

### PHASE 2

The second phase of the project will include the Gateway area barn rebuild, boardwalk crossings, observation platforms and associated infrastructure. Phase 2 construction is dependent on the availability of funding and considerations of programming after the implementation of Phase 1.

### PROGRAMS

As a part of the program goals of providing healthy food to the community and creating partnerships, the Land Trust has explored the possibility of collaborative relationships with organizations and institutions in the region to expand the impact of the Community Harvest vision.

The Land Trust currently has two highly active community organization partners with operations on the ranch, Esperanza Community Farms and Watsonville Wetlands Watch. Esperanza Community Farms grows food at Watsonville slough farm for distribution to local low income families. The Land Trust provides free use of the land to the organization to subsidize the cost of the food, increasing the impact of the program. Watsonville Wetlands Watch, aside from providing wetland and wildlife education programming and ecological restoration services on and off the ranch, also runs a fruit tree distribution program in the City of Watsonville where residents are gifted fruit trees and instructed on fruit tree installation and maintenance. We anticipate the expansion of the collaborative relationship with both of these programs and an increase in the positive impact of their work as a result of the Community Harvest program.

We are excited by the possibility of partnering with one or more of the local school districts to create a direct pipeline of healthy, local, organic food from Watsonville Slough Farm to cafeterias around the county. The Land Trust will identify interested school programs, establish relationships with administrators and program officers, identify the needs of the program and connect appropriate programs directly with our professional growers. Students could also visit the property to see where their cafeteria food is grown, to learn about organic agriculture from our growers at the ranch and harvest their own organic produce to share with their families. We are excited at the prospect of school children acting as ambassadors, sharing connection with the property with their families, so all members of the community feel welcome visiting the property and know they belong here.

Another potential program opportunity is partnering with a local agricultural advocacy and educational organization to host agricultural workshops, community garden programming, youth gardening and farming programming. Collaborations with the local school district's Agriculture and Natural Resource signature

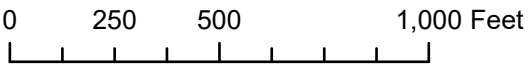


pathways for Agricultural Business program or the Farm Bureau's young farmer and rancher program could provide great opportunities for agricultural vocational experiences for youth on the farm. The presence of the proposed facilities at the property will make collaborations and exciting partnership opportunities such as these possible.





# Watsonville Slough Farm Community Harvest Project



- |                   |                                 |                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Property Boundary | Hilltop Picnic Area (Proposed)  | Road Realignment (Proposed) |
| Trails (Existing) | Observation Platform (Proposed) | Community Harvest Areas     |
| Trails (Proposed) | Farm Roads (Existing)           | Boardwalks (Proposed)       |



**LAND TRUST**  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



## California Department of Transportation

CALTRANS DISTRICT 5  
50 HIGUERA STREET | SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA 93401-5415  
(805) 549-3101 | FAX (805) 549-3329 TTY 711  
[www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov)



December 6, 2024

SCH #2024110411  
SCR/1/R1.878

Randall Adams, Planner  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

### **RE: Watsonville Slough Community Harvest Project Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND)**

Dear Randall Adams:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review the MND for Watsonville Slough Community Harvest Project, which proposes site improvements to support the operation of the proposed Community Harvest Program. These improvements include a reconstructed barn, new restrooms, picnic areas, parking improvements, trails, and other minor improvements. 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. Caltrans offers the following comments in response to the MND:

1. Please be aware of the Harkins Bicycle/Pedestrian project near the proposed project. The Harkins Bicycle/Pedestrian project may overlap with this proposed project. Please contact the Project Manager Madilyn Jacobsen at [madilyn.jacobsen@dot.ca.gov](mailto:madilyn.jacobsen@dot.ca.gov) for additional information and coordination of any large equipment through the Harkins Bicycle/ Pedestrian Project.
2. Please submit a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) to determine the cumulative impacts at and around the Harkin Slough Road/ State Route (SR) 1 interchange.
3. The County should consider the necessity of a parking coordinator for the proposed project for all events regardless of the number of anticipated guests in attendance especially if the special events occur concurrent with the Community Harvest Program. The coordinator should consider the impacts of other events in the vicinity such as football games, homecoming, prom, etc. from Pajaro Valley High School.

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment"



Randall Adams, Planner  
December 6, 2024  
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Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed project. If you have any questions or need further clarification on the items discussed above, please contact me at (805) 835-6543 or email [Jacob.m.Hernandez@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Jacob.m.Hernandez@dot.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacob Hernandez". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jacob Hernandez  
Transportation Planner  
District 5 Local Development Review Coordinator



State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
 DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
 Bay Delta Region  
 2825 Cordelia Road, Suite 100  
 Fairfield, CA 94534  
 (707) 428-2002  
[www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov)

**GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor**  
**CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director**



December 11, 2024

Randall Adams, Planner  
 County Santa Cruz  
 701 Ocean Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
[Randall.Adams@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:Randall.Adams@santacruzcountyca.gov)

Subject: Application Number 231264 - Watsonville Slough Community Harvest Project,  
 Mitigated Negative Declaration, SCH No. 2024110411, Santa Cruz County

Dear Randall Adams:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) from the Santa Cruz County Planning Department (County) for the Application Number 231264 - Watsonville Slough Community Harvest Project (Project) pursuant the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).<sup>1</sup> CDFW is submitting comments on the MND to inform the County, as the Lead Agency, of our concerns regarding potentially significant impacts to sensitive resources associated with the proposed Project. CDFW is providing these comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that are within CDFW's area of expertise and relevant to its statutory responsibilities (Fish & G. Code, § 1802), and/or which are required to be approved by CDFW (CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15086, 15096 & 15204).

## CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State. (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines, § 15386, subd. (a).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, § 1802.) Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting these comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority over the Project pursuant to the Fish and

<sup>1</sup> CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

Randall Adams  
 County Santa Cruz  
 December 11, 2024  
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Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent the Project may result in "take," as defined by State law, of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), related authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code will be required.

## **REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

### **California Endangered Species Act**

A CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) must be obtained from CDFW if the Project has the potential to result in "take" of plants or animals listed under CESA, either during construction or over the life of the Project. Under CESA, "take" means "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." (Fish & G. Code, § 86.) CDFW's issuance of an ITP is subject to CEQA and to facilitate permit issuance, any project modifications and mitigation measures must be incorporated into the CEQA document analysis, discussion, and mitigation monitoring and reporting program. If the Project will impact CESA listed species, early consultation is encouraged, as significant modification to the Project and mitigation measures may be required in order to obtain a CESA permit.

CEQA requires a mandatory finding of significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species. Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21001, subd. (c) & 21083; CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15380, 15064 & 15065.) In addition, pursuant to CEQA, the lead agency cannot approve a project unless all impacts to the environment are avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels, or the lead agency makes and supports Findings of Overriding Consideration (FOC) for impacts that remain significant despite the implementation of all feasible mitigation. FOC under CEQA, however, do not eliminate the Project proponent's obligation to comply with the Fish and Game Code.

### **Lake and Streambed Alteration**

CDFW requires an LSA Notification, pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1600 et seq., for any Project activities that will substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow; change or use material from the bed, channel, or bank including associated riparian or wetland resources; or deposit or dispose of material where it may pass into a river, lake, or stream. Work within ephemeral streams, washes, watercourses with a subsurface flow, and floodplains are generally subject to notification requirements. CDFW, as a Responsible Agency under CEQA, would consider the CEQA document for the Project. CDFW may not execute a final LSA Agreement until it has complied with CEQA (Pub. Resources Code § 21000 et seq.) as the Responsible Agency.

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## Raptors and Other Nesting Birds

CDFW has authority over actions that may result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections protecting birds, their eggs, and nests include §§ 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nests or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird). Migratory birds are also protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

**Proponent:** Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Applicant)

**Description and Location:** The proposed Project is located at 275 Lee Road on the west side of Lee Road and Highway 1 within the southern portion of unincorporated southern Santa Cruz County. The Project site is bounded by Lee Road on the east, Harkins Slough Road on the north and agricultural and rural lands on the west and south. The proposed project would result in structural and site improvements to support operation of the proposed Community Harvest Program at the Watsonville Slough Farm that is owned and managed by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust). A reconstructed barn, new restrooms, picnic areas, parking improvements, trails and several other minor improvements are proposed to support the Program. In addition, the Project includes the development of four agricultural worker residential units.

## SPECIES POTENTIAL

Threatened, endangered, and other special-status species that are known to occur, or have the potential to occur in or near the Project site, include, but are not limited to the species listed below and in Table 1:

- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*; FT)
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata pallida*; SSC)
- San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat (*Neotoma fuscipes annectens*; SSC)
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*; SSC)
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*; ST)
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*; SFP)
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*; SFP)

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- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*; SFP)
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*; SFP)
- Nesting birds
- Roosting bats

FT = Federally Threatened; ST = State Threatened; SFP = State Fully Protected;  
 SSC = State Species of Special Concern

## COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the below comments and recommendations to assist the County in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

### COMMENT 1: Fully Protected Species

Fully protected species, such as bald eagle, golden eagle, American peregrine falcon, and white-tailed kite, may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except as follows:

- Take is for necessary scientific research;
- Efforts to recover a fully protected, endangered, or threatened species, live capture and relocation of a bird species for the protection of livestock; or
- They are a covered species whose conservation and management is provided for in a Natural Community Conservation Plan (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511, 4700, 5050, & 5515).

Specified types of infrastructure projects may be eligible for an incidental take permit for unavoidable impacts to fully protected species if certain conditions are met (Fish & G. Code §2081.15). Project proponents should consult with CDFW early in the Project planning process.

### COMMENT 2: Tricolor Blackbird

**Issue:** Although this species has not been known to breed in the area since 2008, if the number of tricolored blackbird breeding on the Central Coast continues to increase, this species may breed in or near the Study Area in the future (Biotic Assessment for the WSF Community Harvest Program, page 43). CDFW recommends the MND include

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tricolored blackbird surveys and avoidance if tricolored blackbird are seen breeding in or near the Project Study Area.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 1 – Tricolored Blackbird Surveys:** CDFW recommends that Project activities be timed to avoid the typical bird breeding season (February 1 through September 15). However, if Project activities must take place during that time, CDFW recommends that a qualified wildlife biologist conduct surveys for nesting tricolored blackbird no more than 10 days prior to the start of implementation to evaluate presence/absence of tricolored blackbird nesting colonies in proximity to Project activities and to evaluate potential Project-related impacts

**Recommended Mitigation Measure 2 – Tricolored Blackbird Avoidance and Mitigation:** If an active tricolored blackbird nesting colony is found during pre-activity surveys, CDFW recommends implementation of a minimum 300-foot no-disturbance buffer in accordance with CDFW's *"Staff Guidance Regarding Avoidance of Impacts to Tricolored Blackbird Breeding Colonies on Agricultural Fields in 2015,"* <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=99310&inline>. CDFW advises that this buffer remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified biologist has determined that nesting has ceased, the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the colony or parental care for survival. It is important to note that tricolored blackbird colonies can expand over time and for this reason, the colony may need to be reassessed to determine the extent of the breeding colony within 10 days prior to Project initiation. In the event that a tricolored blackbird nesting colony is detected during surveys, consultation with CDFW is warranted to discuss how to implement the Project and avoid take, or if avoidance is not feasible, to acquire an ITP, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2081(b), prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data#44524420-pdf-field-survey-form>. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: [CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov). The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Plants-and-Animals>.

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## FILING FEES


The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying Project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (See Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

## CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist the County in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources.

Questions and coordination pertaining to this letter should be directed to Alexis Harrison, Environmental Scientist, at (707) 815-2779 or [Alexis.Harrison@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Alexis.Harrison@wildlife.ca.gov); or Wes Stokes, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at (707) 339-6066 or [Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
Erin Chappell  
Regional Manager  
Bay Delta Region

ec: Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse (SCH No. 2024110411)  
Craig Weightman, CDFW Bay Delta Region - [Craig.Weightman@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Craig.Weightman@wildlife.ca.gov)