

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: December 9, 2020

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning Staff

Subject: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Consideration of a request by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), pursuant to Government Code Section 65402, to determine if SFPUC's proposed 6.5-mile Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project in the unincorporated County in SFPUC lands in the vicinity of State Routes 92 and 35 conforms to the County General Plan.

County File Number: PLN 2020-00270

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find that the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project (APNs 093-080-100, 093-080-120, 093-090-010, 093-090-040, 093-090-050, 093-101-050, 093-101-010, 093-070-030, and 093-070-020) conforms to the County General Plan.

BACKGROUND

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), proposes to improve and develop recreational trails and associated facilities located within the Peninsula Watershed in central San Mateo County in order to extend and enhance the Bay Area Ridge Trail, improve the existing Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, and enhance public awareness of the watershed and SFPUC's role. The Peninsula Watershed property is owned by the City and County of San Francisco and managed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The project is a component of the SFPUC's Peninsula Watershed Management Plan.

Government Code Section 65402 requires that SFPUC request a determination by the San Mateo County Planning Commission as to the conformity of the proposed public buildings or structures with the San Mateo County General Plan. The proposed project's conformity with the applicable policies of the General Plan is evaluated in detail by the staff report, and summarized below.

DISCUSSION

The project area is designated as Open Space in the General Plan, and located within the Resource Management (RM) Zoning District. The General Plan policies applicable to the project include those that address:

- Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources
- Soil Resources
- Visual Quality of scenic corridors
- Park and Recreation Resources
- Rural Land Use
- Transportation; and,
- Noise

The proposed enhancements to public recreation trails and facilities proposed by the SFPUC are consistent with General Plan Policies that encourage the expansion of park and recreation resources. These improvements have been carefully planned and designed to avoid any conflict with General Plan policies.

Environmental Review. A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation.

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County File Number: PLN 2020-00270

PROPOSAL

Consideration of a request by the SFPUC, pursuant to Government Code Section 65402, that the County determine whether the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project (APNs 093-080-100, 093-080-120, 093-090-010, 093-090-040, 093-090-050, 093-101-050, 093-101-010, 093-070-030, and 093-070-020), which would extend the Bay Area Ridge Trail by approximately 6.5 miles, construct new trail support facilities, and convey a permanent easement of an existing trail segment, conforms to the County General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission find that the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project (APNs 093-080-100, 093-080-120, 093-090-010, 093-090-040, 093-090-050, 093-101-050, 093-101-010, 093-070-030, and 093-070-020) conforms to the County General Plan.

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: Chanda Singh, Senior Transportation Planner, 650/363-1853

Applicant: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC)

Owners: City and County of San Francisco, Water Department

Location: Unincorporated San Mateo County, North Skyline and San Francisco Watershed Lands. The project area includes watershed lands along the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, which is approximately 1.5 miles north of the State Route 92 (S.R. 92) /

State Route 35 (S.R. 35) intersection (north of the Skylawn Memorial Park), and watershed lands extending south from S.R. 92 approximately 6 miles to the Phleger Estate boundary and east from S.R. 35 a few hundred feet.

APN(s): 093-080-100, 093-080-120, 093-090-010, 093-090-040, 093-090-050, 093-101-050, 093-101-010, 093-070-030, and 093-070-020

Project Details: North of SR-92 includes: 0.5-mile loop trail. Project also includes new trailhead 50-car parking lot (40,000 sq. ft.), improvements to existing parking area (11,000 sq. ft.), and restroom (130 sq. ft.). South of SR-92 includes: 6-mile trail along SR-35 which will include retaining walls (2,850 linear feet) and a pre-fabricated bridge (30 feet long by 6 feet wide). Project also includes a 20-car parking lot (22,600 sq. ft. with 1,750 square foot driveway); two permanent rock spillways of 1,250 sq. ft. and 750 sq. ft.; five new access drives (14,500 sq. ft.); and two restrooms (130 sq. ft. each).

Existing Zoning: Resource Management District (RM) and Residential Estates District/Residential Density District 11 (R-E/S-11)
General Plan Designation: Open Space

Existing Land Use: Open space, recreation, watershed, rural residences

Flood Zone: D (No Analysis – Possible but Undetermined) and X (Area of Minimal Flooding)

Environmental Evaluation: A General Plan Conformity analysis is not subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378, in that it is not a “project” as defined by CEQA. The San Francisco Planning Department completed the required environmental review of the proposed SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project. San Francisco Public Utilities Commission published a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on June 24, 2020, and adopted mitigation measures to address environmental impacts of the project. The DEIR is available online at <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/1998082030/10>. The DEIR found that the project could result in significant and unavoidable project-level impacts related to biological resources and transportation and circulation, dependent on the final public access programs. The DEIR identifies feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that would avoid or lessen the severity of project impacts and references additional mitigation measures as identified the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (January 11, 2001, San Francisco Planning Department File No. 96.222E and State Clearinghouse No. 98082030); however, some impacts will remain significant and unavoidable after the implementation of all feasible mitigation measures.

Setting: The project area has rolling ridge-top topography flanked by sloping hillsides, in addition to diverse intact vegetation communities like open meadows, dense patches of coastal scrub, and tall stands of mature Douglas fir, mixed evergreen, and redwood resources. Along the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, development consists of paved and

unpaved roads, gates, and various fencing and the landscaped grounds of the Skylawn Memorial Park at the trail's southern end. There are a small number of private residences along the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail.

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

1. Project Description

The project sponsor, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), proposes to improve and develop recreational trails and associated facilities located within the Peninsula Watershed in central San Mateo County in order to extend and enhance the Bay Area Ridge Trail, improve the existing Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, and enhance public awareness of the watershed and SFPUC's role. The Peninsula Watershed property is owned by the City and County of San Francisco and managed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The project is a component of the SFPUC's Peninsula Watershed Management Plan. The project area includes watershed lands along the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail, which is approximately 1.5 miles north of the State Route 92 (SR-92)/State Route 35 (SR-35) intersection (north of the Skylawn Memorial Park), and watershed lands extending south from SR-92 approximately 6 miles to the Phleger Estate boundary and east from SR-35 a few hundred feet.

Primary project components proposed for areas north of SR-92 include a new 0.5-mile universal access loop trail (that would provide Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant access and parking), and a 50-car parking lot and restroom near the watershed's Cemetery Gate, as well as the transfer of a public access easement (from the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council to the SFPUC) along an existing segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail through Skylawn Memorial Park. Project components proposed for areas south of SR-92 include a new 6-mile Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail along SR-35, a 20-car parking lot, and two restrooms. Along the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail, the SFPUC would install a prefabricated bridge to span a gulch that intersects the trail alignment.

The SFPUC is considering multiple public access program configurations with differing levels of restrictiveness. These access programs would apply to existing and new trail areas north and south of State Route 92, and cover a range of potential access controls – from supervised to unsupervised.

It is important to note that because the proposed project is a public project by an agency of the City of San Francisco, the principles of intergovernmental immunity apply, and therefore no San Mateo County building permits or other development approvals are required for this

project, and San Mateo County has no authority to prohibit or require modifications to the project based on development regulations. As a public project of the City of San Francisco, the project is subject to San Francisco regulations, and exempt from San Mateo County building and zoning regulations. However, Government Code Section 65402 requires that SFPUC request a determination by the San Mateo County Planning Commission as to the conformity of the proposed public buildings or structures with the San Mateo County General Plan as explained in more detail below.

2. Reason for General Plan Conformity

Government Code Section 65402 states, in relevant part, that "... a city shall not ... construct or authorize a public building or structure, in ... unincorporated territory, if ... the county in which such unincorporated territory is situated has adopted a general plan ... and such general plan ... is applicable thereto, until the location, purpose and extent of such ... public building or structure have been submitted to and reported upon by the planning agency having jurisdiction, as to conformity with said adopted general plan ..." While San Francisco is exempt from San Mateo County's zoning and other relevant development regulations, SFPUC must request an analysis of the relevant components of the SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension project's conformity with the San Mateo County General Plan. Although the Government Code requires this general plan conformity analysis, it is silent on the consequences of a determination of non-conformity. A conclusion that the project is inconsistent with the County's General Plan is unlikely to preclude the SFPUC from proceeding with the project due to the principles of intergovernmental immunity, and this interpretation is supported by case law. Nevertheless, the process of reviewing the project's conformance to the General Plan provides a useful opportunity for the County and its residents to provide input to the SFPUC on issues related to the Project.

3. Analysis

The proposed project implicates the following General Plan policies:

a. Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 1.23.a of the County General Plan requires that the County regulate land uses and development activities to prevent and, if infeasible, mitigate to the extent possible, significant adverse impacts on vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.

- (2) Policy 1.24 requires the County to regulate the location, density and design of development to minimize significant adverse impacts and encourage enhancement of vegetative, water, fish and wildlife resources.
- (3) Policy 1.25 requires that the County ensure that development will (1) minimize the removal of vegetative resources; and/or (2) protect vegetation which enhances microclimate, stabilizes slopes or reduces surface water runoff, erosion or sedimentation; and/or (3) protect historic and scenic trees.

Discussion: The project area contains various vegetative, water, and wildlife resources. These resources include diverse intact and unmanaged vegetation communities like open meadows, dense patches of coastal scrub, and tall stands of mature Douglas fir, mixed evergreen, and redwood resources; watersheds of the Upper and Lower Crystal Springs and San Andreas reservoirs; and wildlife including the threatened California red-legged frog, endangered San Francisco garter snake, and other special-status species.

The DEIR identifies construction-related impacts on special-status plants, wildlife, and sensitive natural communities in Impacts BI-1 through BI-3. Project construction would require disturbance over an area of approximately 40 acres, 8 of which would be permanent and 32 of which would be restored. San Francisco Public Utilities Commission would restore areas of temporary impact following construction, but the project will permanently convert 8 acres of habitat to a developed area, including parking lots, which would no longer provide species habitat in the future. Examples of construction impacts include:

- Impacts to populations of special-status plants, such as white-flowered rein orchid, bent-flowered fiddleneck, and others.
- Clearing and/or crushing of vegetation for fencing construction in coast redwood, Douglas fir, and tanoak forest which could affect populations of Montara manzanita, Kings Mountain manzanita, and others.
- Fatalities or disturbance to essential activities for special-status wildlife that has a likelihood of occurring in the project area (e.g., San Francisco garter snake, California red-legged frog, and nesting birds), due to trail construction, parking, or fencing improvements.

The DEIR (Section 4.8.4.4) identifies a series of mitigation measures that reduce impacts of significance to less than significant. A selection of relevant construction mitigation measures includes:

- Survey for special-status plants by qualified botanist in accordance with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife protocol.
- Construction protocol to limit disturbance area by posting signage, flags, stakes or fencing and worker environmental training.
- Preparation and implementation of a revegetation plan by a qualified ecologist for temporarily disturbed areas. Special-status plant mitigation areas shall be established at a ratio of 1:1 (impacted area to plantings) based on either the impacted area or the number of impacted individuals, as deemed appropriate by the qualified ecologist. Plants that can be feasibly relocated shall be transplanted into the revegetation site, typically adjacent suitable habitat that is unoccupied, to avoid making transplants into undisturbed occupied habitat and potentially spreading diseases.
- Qualified biologist to act as construction monitor prior to work and conduct a survey no more than two weeks prior to onset of work and immediately prior to commencing work for special-status species.
- Protective measures suited to species found on site, which may include: wildlife exclusion fence with exit funnels, monitoring of sites during construction, avoidance of nesting sites, cease of work if special-status species is present with animal relocation of its own volition unless otherwise approved, performance spot checks of project area at least once a week and daily between November and April during rain events, specialized construction approach, and more.

The DEIR also identifies potential impacts of project operations due to increased visitors and maintenance. The scale of impacts is dependent upon the how access to the trails are managed, such as whether trail access is supervised via docents. It is important to note that much of the potentially affected project area north of SR-92 (Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail section) is already disturbed and/or regularly used by SFPUC staff and visitors. For example, approximately 10 to

20 visitors (i.e., hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians) use the trail under the existing docent program, up to three days per week. Potential operation impacts include but are not limited to:

- Increased potential for visitors to encounter and harm the San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog;
- Direct impacts (e.g., trampling and crushing) on Mission blue butterfly or San Bruno elfin butterfly host plants, which could result in take of listed butterflies, including destruction of larvae and the permanent loss of occupied habitat;
- Increased visitor access to trample/crush existing vegetation; and
- Adverse impacts related to accelerated spread of Phytophthora pathogens (including sudden oak death).

The DEIR identifies operations mitigation measures, including but not limited to:

- Annual surveys for rare plants prior to mowing along Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail and mapping and flagging rare plants;
- User rules, which would be posted on signs at trailheads and communicated by SFPUC staff and volunteers, including informational signage on native vegetation impacts;
- Regular inspections of trail fencing;
- Hand-clearing of non-native species;
- 15 mph speed limits at all times;
- Provision of closed (wildlife-proof) garbage containers;
- Preconstruction site assessments;
- Avoidance of sensitive habitats;
- Development of a management vegetation plan; and
- Resource monitoring.

The proposed project requires the removal of approximately 170 trees, ranging in size from 4 inches to 56 inches in diameter at breast height

(DEIR, p.2-22 to 2-25). The project has been designed to minimize tree removal, including routing a portion of the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail along an existing fuelbreak (DEIR, p.2-8). While trees protect against modification of microclimates, loss of animal habitat, changes in soil conditions, risk of landslide, degradation of human habitat, and other environmental benefits, the limited number and small size of trees anticipated for removal within the heavily forested area would not materially affect these environmental factors. Furthermore, the project would add the public benefit of trail access to an area presently inaccessible to the general public, while maintaining the forest habitat of southern Skyline Boulevard. The project would have a less than significant impact to vegetation and tree removal for all access variants. The City and County of San Francisco, which owns the Peninsula Watershed, is not controlled or regulated by San Mateo County, and therefore the proposed tree removal does not conflict with the General Plan policy.

The project's proposed construction and operations mitigation measures are consistent with measures the County would typically require as conditions of approval. These measures are sufficient to ensure consistency with the Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies of the General Plan.

- (4) Policy 1.30 permits only land uses and development activities that are compatible with the protection of sensitive habitats, such as nature education and research, trails and scenic overlooks and, at a minimum level, necessary public service and private infrastructure.

Discussion: The proposed project is already used for and will continue use for trails and provides necessary infrastructure for trail access; therefore, it complies with this General Plan policy.

b. Soil Resources Policies

- (1) Policy 2.17 calls for the County to regulate development to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (2) Policy 2.23 calls for the County to regulate excavation, grading, filling and land clearing activities to protect against accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation.
- (3) Policy 2.25 calls for the County to regulate topsoil removal operations to protect against accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation.

Discussion. Elevations along the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail alignment vary from 878 feet above sea level at the northern limit to 2,065 feet above sea level at the trail route's southern terminus (Phleger Estate). The trail alignment generally follows the roadway, except where it must be built around existing private property or where it strays from the roadway to follow a spur ridge and old grade cut. The SFPUC would construct the majority of the trail on relatively level, natural slopes or existing cut bench slopes of less than 5 percent. The Peninsula Watershed Management Plan identifies erosion and land stability sensitivity zones, which are classified as high, moderate, or low sensitivity. The Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail would cross five areas of high erosion and land stability sensitivity, and the remainder would be located in areas of moderate erosion (DEIR Figure 4.9-1). Table 2-1 of the DEIR includes a summary of construction requirements for the project, including the depth and quantity of excavation for each project component and estimated construction duration. Project earthwork would include the excavation of approximately 7,870 cubic yards of soil and the import of 72,973 cubic yards for trail base, surfacing, and the parking lot.

The Peninsula Watershed Management Plan EIR notes that without proper controls, these activities could increase the potential for exposed soils to be eroded by wind or stormwater runoff, resulting in long-term soil loss. San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has proposed policies and management actions to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation during construction as part of the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan (Table III.C-2 and described in Table II-1). Measures include but are not limited to: preparing and implementing a grading plan, subject to approval by SFPUC staff; following erosion control best management practices for protection of wetlands, streams, and shoreline areas; and identify and indicate in the GIS areas where land disturbance has accelerated mass movement or soil erosion processes to unacceptable levels and stabilize these areas using soil conservation BMPs. The DEIR describes that the General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities requires the preparation of a stormwater pollution prevention plan that specifies best management practices including erosion. Examples include: providing a positive slope away from cut slopes, providing erosion control on all cut-and-fill slopes, protecting slopes from erosion during the wet season, and maintaining all landscaped slopes in a vegetated state after project completion (DEIR p.4.9-17).

The proposed project would require ground disturbance over an area of about 32 acres, and SFPUC would return 24 disturbed acres to their preconstruction condition, including replacement of topsoil removed.

For the 8 acres that will be permanently disturbed, SFPUC would remove the soils that are not geotechnically suitable for supporting the improvements (like parking surfaces), and cover the area with surfaces designed to prevent any further loss of topsoil due to erosion.

Runoff from newly created trail surfaces, restroom facilities, and parking lots could cause erosion and could remove topsoil. The SFPUC will construct the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail and the loop trail with an approximately 1 to 2 percent cross-slope to route water away from the slope. In addition, the project description includes two permanent rock spillways along the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail to dissipate trail surface runoff. For the proposed 20-stall parking lot near the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail trailhead and the 50-stall parking lot south of Cemetery Gate, the SFPUC will install a drain inlet to collect runoff and route it into a nearby vegetated area, and place a small amount of rock (i.e., 20 sq. ft.) at each drain outlet to dissipate runoff energy and prevent erosion. The SFPUC will also implement measures to limit unauthorized off-trail access to further prevent erosion.

These mitigation measures are similar to the Best Management Practices that would be required by San Mateo County for a project of this type, and are also consistent with the San Mateo County Stormwater Management Plan. These measures are sufficient to mitigate potential soil erosion and sedimentation in accordance with the policies of the General Plan.

c. Visual Quality Policies

- (1) Policy 4.22 calls for the County to protect the visual quality of scenic corridors by managing the location and appearance of structural development.
- (2) Policy 4.25.a. calls for the location of structures and paved areas to carefully conform with the natural vegetation, landforms, and topography of the site.
- (3) Policy 4.26.a calls for minimizing grading or earth-moving operations.
- (4) Policy 4.26.b requires blending graded areas with adjacent landforms through the use of contour grading rather than harsh cutting or terracing of the site.

- (5) Policy 4.28.a discourages structures on open ridgelines and skylines, when seen as part of the public view in order to preserve visual integrity.
- (6) Policy 4.29.b calls for the replacement of vegetation and trees removed during construction wherever possible.
- (7) Policy 4.45 designates scenic roads and corridors, including Skyline Boulevard (from San Francisco to Half Moon Bay Road), Half Moon Bay Road (State Route 92), and Cañada Road.
- (8) Policy 4.47 regulates both site and architectural design of structures within rural scenic corridors.
- (9) Policy 4.59 calls for locating development in scenic corridors, so it does not obstruct views from scenic roads.
- (10) Policy 4.62 calls for integrating parking and paved areas within the site and reducing the visual impact from the scenic corridor.

Discussion: The proposed project is entirely within the geographic scope of the aesthetic resources setting characterized in the Peninsula Watershed Management Plan EIR and subject to those management policies. The project area could be visible from designated scenic corridors, including Cañada Road, Half Moon Bay Road (State Route 92), and State Route 35 (from San Francisco to Half Moon Bay Road).

The proposed trail alignment traverses varied landscapes including scrub-covered ridges, vegetated fuel breaks, and densely forested slopes (DEIR, p.2-10). San Francisco Public Utilities Commission identified the proposed route to follow the existing grades and topography, minimize the removal of trees, and maintain a maximum 10 percent slope along the length of the trail. The project requires ground disturbance and vegetation trimming in an area of approximately 26 acres to 37 acres, depending on the variant chosen (less than 1 percent of the total watershed area). Although the proposed trail alignment has been chosen to minimize impacts and tree removal, SFPUC has noted that the project would require removal of up to 170 trees ranging in size from 4 inches to 56 inches in diameter at breast height, and involve the installation of retaining walls at 6 locations in order to stabilize slopes and establish a terrace for building segments along steep, sloped areas of trail alignment (DEIR p.2-17).

Construction of the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail improvements (i.e., loop trail, parking lots, restroom, trailhead, and fencing) and the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail would occur in tandem during the 12-month construction period. Trail work would be expected to proceed at approximately 150 to 250 feet per day. Construction impacts would not be noticeable to motorists traveling along S.R. 92 due to distance, intervening topography and vegetation, and the project's location with respect to motorists' visual orientation. However, motorists traveling along S.R. 35 would have intermittent views of equipment, personnel, and vegetation clearing. The aesthetic effects on trail users associated with project construction would not be appreciable.

Upon the completion of construction, the SFPUC would return disturbed areas beyond the project footprint (approximately 18.5 acres or 29.2 acres) to their approximate preconstruction conditions (e.g., recontoured and revegetated). The DEIR notes that special-status plant mitigation areas will be established at a 1:1 ratio (DEIR p.4.8-52).

Implementation of the project would permanently disturb up to approximately 8 acres: 7 acres would be affected by at-grade developments (e.g., access drives, parking lots, and trail surfaces), and 1 acre would be affected by vertical project components (e.g., fencing, gates, and restrooms). Project changes would generally occur proximate to existing development or management activities, would be similar in size and scale to those developments or activities, and would be subordinate to the aesthetic resources that contribute to the watershed's high scenic quality (i.e., topography, vegetation, and vistas). The restrooms are approximately 12 feet tall and will conform to appropriate accessibility standards and California Title 24 requirements. The design and surface treatment would be similar to those of other restrooms along the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail and would be subject to the City and County of San Francisco's Civic Design process. The structures would be comprised of wood and concrete with non-reflective, earth-toned surfaces (DEIR, p.2-17).

The proposed project incorporates mitigation measures and minimizes impacts to visual quality, in keeping with the purpose of the project and existing trail alignments. The proposed trail alignment and structures will conform to the existing topography, except in a few locations where some grading will be required. Due to the project's location within the watershed, coupled with the area's intervening topography and vegetation, there are not many points from which the project area is visible, and project implementation would not result in material alterations or view obstructions of landscape elements of important scenic vistas. While some project changes would be

intermittently visible to motorists traveling along S.R. 35 as well as to visitors to the Bay Area Ridge Trail (including Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail and Sweeney Ridge Trail), the effects would be minimal. The proposed project therefore does not conflict with the Visual Quality General Plan policies.

d. Park and Recreation Resource Policies

- (1) Policy 6.3.b encourages the expansion of existing park and recreation facilities to meet future needs while developing new acquisition and development programs.
- (2) Policy 6.4.b calls for mitigating, to the extent feasible, the impacts of those recreation uses which may adversely affect the environment.
- (3) Policy 6.5.a encourages providing appropriate access and conveniences for all people in park and recreation facilities.
- (4) Policy 6.10 generally encourages park providers to locate passive park and recreation facilities in rural areas in order to protect and preserve environmentally sensitive open space lands. This policy considers the following activities to be generally compatible with passive park and recreation facilities: camping, hiking, picnicking, horseback riding and nature study.
- (5) Policy 6.13.b encourages development plans to include restroom facilities.
- (6) Policy 6.14 calls for the County to encourage all providers to design sites to accommodate recreation uses that minimize adverse effects on the natural environment and adjoining private ownership.
- (7) Policy 6.29 encourages providers to make provisions to protect, operate and maintain park and recreation systems and related easements.
- (8) Policy 6.39 encourages the development of a system of trails that link existing and proposed park and recreation facilities within San Mateo County and adjacent counties, and multi-use where appropriate and trails under management by other public agencies.

Discussion: The proposed project expands passive park (e.g., hiking) recreational access in the watershed lands, connecting and

augmenting existing trail facilities, including to the Bay Area Ridge Trail. The proposed Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail improvements include a 0.5-mile universal access loop trail that provides Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant access and parking, expanding access and convenience for all people. The proposed project also includes restrooms at both trailheads (north and south of SR-92). The DEIR includes mitigation strategies to reduce the impact of the envisioned recreational uses (walking, biking, and equestrian) on the environment; many of these measures are described in Vegetative, Water, Fish and Wildlife Resources Policies Analysis section. The DEIR analyzes an alternative to the proposed project (Alternative C, Pedestrian Only Trail Access), which would limit the mode of visitor access on the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail (DEIR p.S-5) and avoid impacts to special status species.

The proposed recreational enhancements, as designed and mitigated, are consistent with the Parks and Recreation policies of the General Plan.

e. Rural Land Use Policies

- (1) Policy 9.35(a) encourages the continuation and expansion of existing public recreation land uses on non-agricultural lands, including but not limited to public beaches, parks, recreation areas, wild areas and trails.
- (2) Policy 9.43 recognizes the San Francisco watershed lands as unique areas of special open space significance that should be protected from conflicting land uses in order to retain their value as open space, wildlife, water supply, and recreational resources.

Discussion: The primary purpose of the proposed project is to continue the existing Bay Area Ridge Trail and expand recreational resources and use in the San Francisco watershed lands, consistent with the above General Plan policies.

f. Transportation Policies

- (1) Policy 12.15 supports improvements needed due to safety or congestion, including improved traffic control measures such as signing, lane markings, and others.
- (2) Policy 12.17 calls for working with Caltrans to improve major east-west routes in the County as traffic conditions warrant.

Discussion: The DEIR visitation estimates indicate that the project, under the proposed access program and variants, would generate fewer than 500 trips per day and that the majority of trail users would travel to the area on weekends and during off-peak-hour times on weekdays and would therefore generate fewer than 100 peak-hour trips. Route 294, operated by the San Mateo County Transit District (Samtrans), which connects San Mateo (Hillsdale) and Half Moon Bay via S.R. 92, has stops in each direction at the northern end of the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail, at the S.R. 92/Lifemark Road intersection in the westbound direction, and at the S.R. 92/ S.R. 35 intersection in the eastbound direction. Therefore, the project is not anticipated to increase traffic congestion.

The DEIR determined that project operations with unsupervised visitor access would increase the risk of conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, bicyclists, or equestrians attempting to cross State Route 92 where no marked or signalized crossing exists. The SFPUC does not propose to connect segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail north and south of S.R. 92, nor does it propose to facilitate or otherwise encourage pedestrian, bicycle, or equestrian crossing of S.R. 92. Trail users attempting to cross S.R. 92 near its intersections with Lifemark Road or S.R. 35 would create potentially hazardous conditions. S.R. 92 carries approximately 26,800 to 28,900 vehicles per day in this area, and is extremely congested when traffic volumes are highest.

The preferred Alternative B, Relocated Parking Lot and Trailhead South of SR-92, would avoid the significant-and-unavoidable-with-mitigation impact related to traffic hazards by relocating the parking lot and trailhead for the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail from the intersection of S.R. 92 / S.R. 35 to a new location approximately 1.5 miles south of S.R. 92, near the site of a proposed permanent access drive and temporary construction staging. This reduced trail alignment would accommodate multimodal access and include docent-led, unsupervised/unrestricted, or unsupervised/restricted access. The 1.5-mile gap between S.R. 92 and the relocated trailhead of the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail would substantially reduce the likelihood that visitors of one trail segment would attempt crossing S.R. 92 to reach the opposite segment.

Caltrans has explored various options to address existing congestion concerns (without the proposed project) at the intersection of SR-92 and SR-35 in the past due to Level of Service F for vehicles northbound on SR-35 turning left to westbound SR-92 during weekday peak hours. Options explored include traffic signals, roundabout and grade separation. The SFPUC intends to work with Caltrans to formulate and execute an agreement on the design, funding, and

construction of a solution to reduce potentially hazardous conditions for trail user access across S.R. 92 near its intersections with S.R. 35 and Lifemark Road. The agreement shall also provide for the construction of new sidewalks connecting the selected crossing improvement (i.e., bridge or roundabout) to the existing adjacent Bay Area Ridge Trail segment along Lifemark Road to the north, and the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail trailhead and parking area approximately 300 feet to the south. SFPUC's financial contribution in the agreement shall be roughly proportional to the project's impact. The proposed project supports both General Plan policies.

- (3) Policy 12.44 supports the development of bicycle trails in rural areas.

Discussion: The project would add 6.5 miles of bicycle trails in rural areas and supports this General Plan policy.

- (4) Policy 13.19 encourages the provision of operational and safety improvements to Highway 92 to increase safety and reduce conflicts between truck traffic from Ox Mountain landfills and commuter traffic.

Discussion: The project would require removal of construction debris and waste (~8,000 cubic yards) with likely disposal at Ox Mountain Landfill. Project construction activities would result in a temporary increase in daily vehicle trips (92 truck and 60 passenger) on Highway 92 in the project area over the anticipated 12-month project construction period; this represents approximately 1.4 percent of current traffic levels. Construction activities would generally take place within SFPUC right-of-way (i.e., outside of the public right-of-way along S.R. 35 and S.R. 92) and would not substantially conflict with traffic, transit, bicycle, or pedestrian access or circulation along these facilities. Newly constructed service roads connecting to S.R. 35 would be sited to provide adequate sight distance for heavy vehicles to safely enter and exit the construction site. Any activities taking place during the week or weekend within the public right-of-way along S.R. 35 and S.R. 92 or requiring temporary traffic controls such as lane closures would be coordinated directly with Caltrans (through preparation of a Caltrans-approved transportation management plan as part of an application for an encroachment permit) to ensure traffic safety and minimize disruptions to traffic, transit, bicycle, or pedestrian access or circulation along these facilities. The SFPUC would require its Standard Construction Measures (traffic control measures) be included in the construction specifications to maintain transportation and circulation on roadways affected by construction. These requirements include measures such as flaggers, construction warning

signs, scheduling truck trips during non-peak hours, and coordinating with local emergency responder to maintain emergency access. The proposed project includes operational strategies to reduce conflicts and does not conflict with this General Plan policy.

g. Noise Policies

- (1) Policy 16.12 requires the County to regulate noise levels emanating from noise generating land uses through measures which establish maximum land use compatibility and nuisance thresholds.

Discussion. The project will not result in any noise impacts inconsistent with the General Plan. All construction would be conducted on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. and on Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. The SFPUC does not propose any construction during nighttime or legal holidays. The Peninsula Watershed Management Plan EIR acknowledges potential noise increases associated with construction traffic and work, but generally concludes these activities would not substantially increase noise levels at sensitive receptors due to the location of project component sites and noise sources within the watershed boundary that would be generally distant from sensitive receptors. Temporary construction noise could increase ambient noise levels at the nearest residences along the northernmost portion of the trail by more than 10 dBA, which would constitute a significant impact under CEQA. Parking lot construction activities would take place more than 4,000 feet from the nearest residence, which is distant enough that construction noise would be attenuated to background levels before reaching the residence, particularly when factoring the intervening vegetation and changes in topography. However, construction of the 20-vehicle lot proposed for the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail would be approximately 750 feet from the nearest plot within Skylawn Memorial Park. Construction of the 50-vehicle parking lot along the Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail would be approximately 1,500 feet north of the nearest plot within Skylawn Memorial Park. The County's Noise Ordinance, which implements General Plan Policy 16.12, specifically exempts daytime construction from noise thresholds. The project will not operate at night and will generate no nighttime noise.

There are no public airports near the project, which is not located in an area covered by an airport land use plan. The public airports nearest the project area are the San Carlos Airport, which is approximately 7 miles to the southeast, and the Half Moon Bay Airport, which is approximately 7 miles to the northwest. Therefore, the project would not result in the long-term exposure of workers or visitors to excessive

airport-related noise levels. The project is consistent with the Noise Policies of the General Plan.

B. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative to a finding of conformity with the General Plan is for the Planning Commission to find that the proposed buildings and structures do not conform to the County General Plan.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A request for General Plan Conformity analysis is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is not subject to environmental evaluation. As required by CEQA, the San Francisco Planning Department completed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed project, released on June 24, 2020 as Draft Environmental Impact Report, SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project, San Francisco Planning Department Case No. 2016-016100ENV and State Clearinghouse No.1998082030. The DEIR found that the project could result in significant and unavoidable project-level impacts related to biological resources and transportation and circulation. The DEIR identifies feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that would avoid or lessen the severity of project impacts, but there will be significant and unavoidable impacts with mitigation dependent upon the final public access program chosen (e.g., supervised v. unsupervised access).

D. REVIEWING AGENCIES

County Counsel

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Recommended Finding
- B. Location and Noticing Map
- C. Map of Project Overview and Regional Setting – Extract of Figure 2-2 from SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project DEIR
- D. Map and Detailed View of Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail (South of SR-92) – Extract of Figure 2-3 from SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project DEIR
- E. Map and Detailed View of Fifield-Cahill Ridge Trail Improvements (North of SR-92) – Extract of Figure 2-4 from SFPUC Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project DEIR

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COUNTY OF SAN MATEO - PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT A

County of San Mateo
Planning and Building Department

RECOMMENDED FINDING

Permit or Project File Number: PLN 2020-00270 Hearing Date: December 9, 2020

Prepared By: Chanda Singh, Project Planner For Adoption By: Planning Commission

RECOMMENDED FINDING

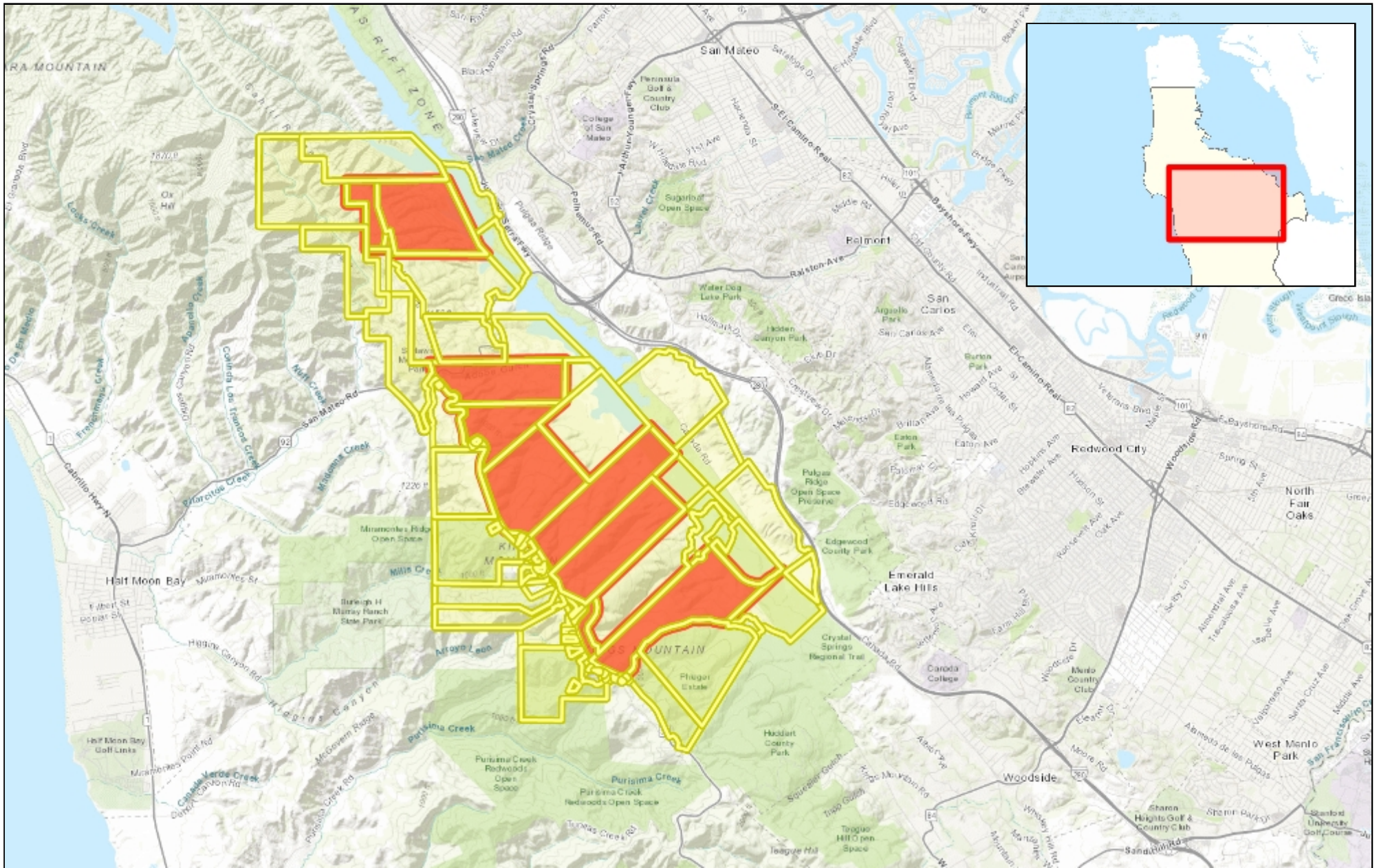
That the Planning Commission find that the proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project (APNs 093-080-100, 093-080-120, 093-090-010, 093-090-040, 093-090-050, 093-101-050, 093-101-010, 093-070-030, and 093-070-020) conforms to the County General Plan.

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COUNTY OF SAN MATEO - PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT B



3.72 0 1.86 3.72 Miles

WGS_1984_Web_Mercator_Auxiliary_Sphere
© Latitude Geographics Group Ltd.

1:117,881



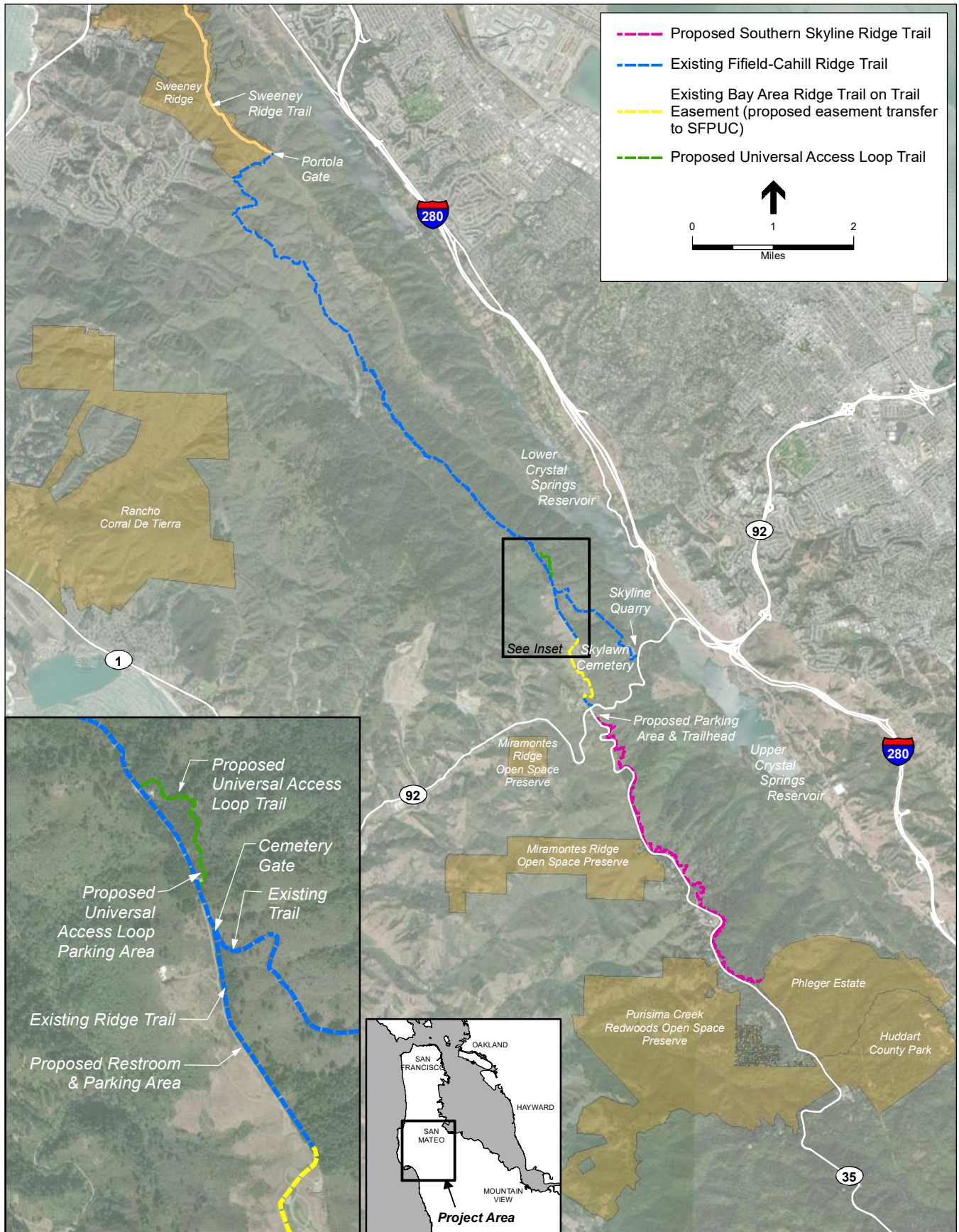
This map is a user generated static output from an Internet mapping site and is for reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable.

THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO - PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT C



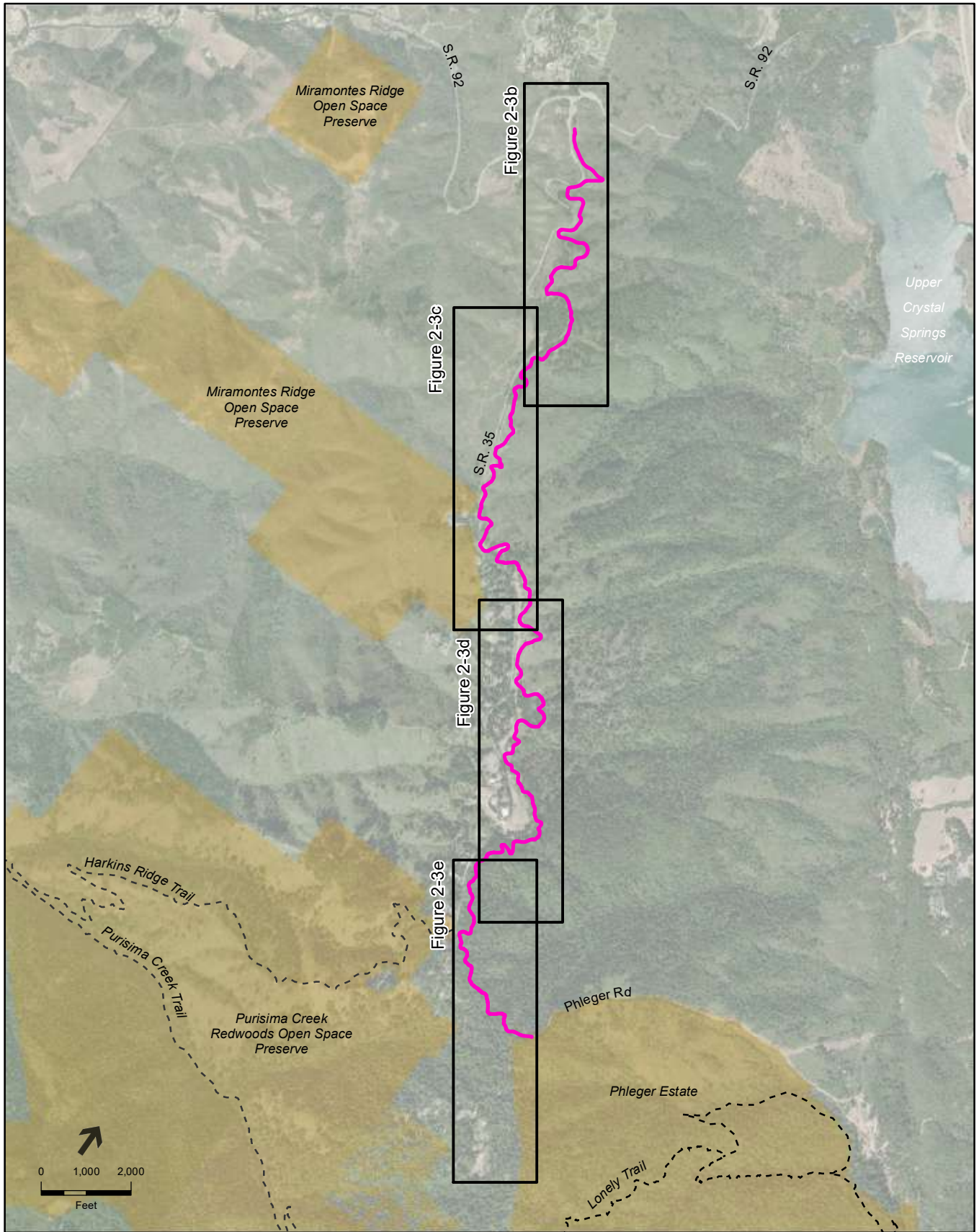
SOURCE: ESRI; ESA

Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-2
 Project Overview and Regional Setting



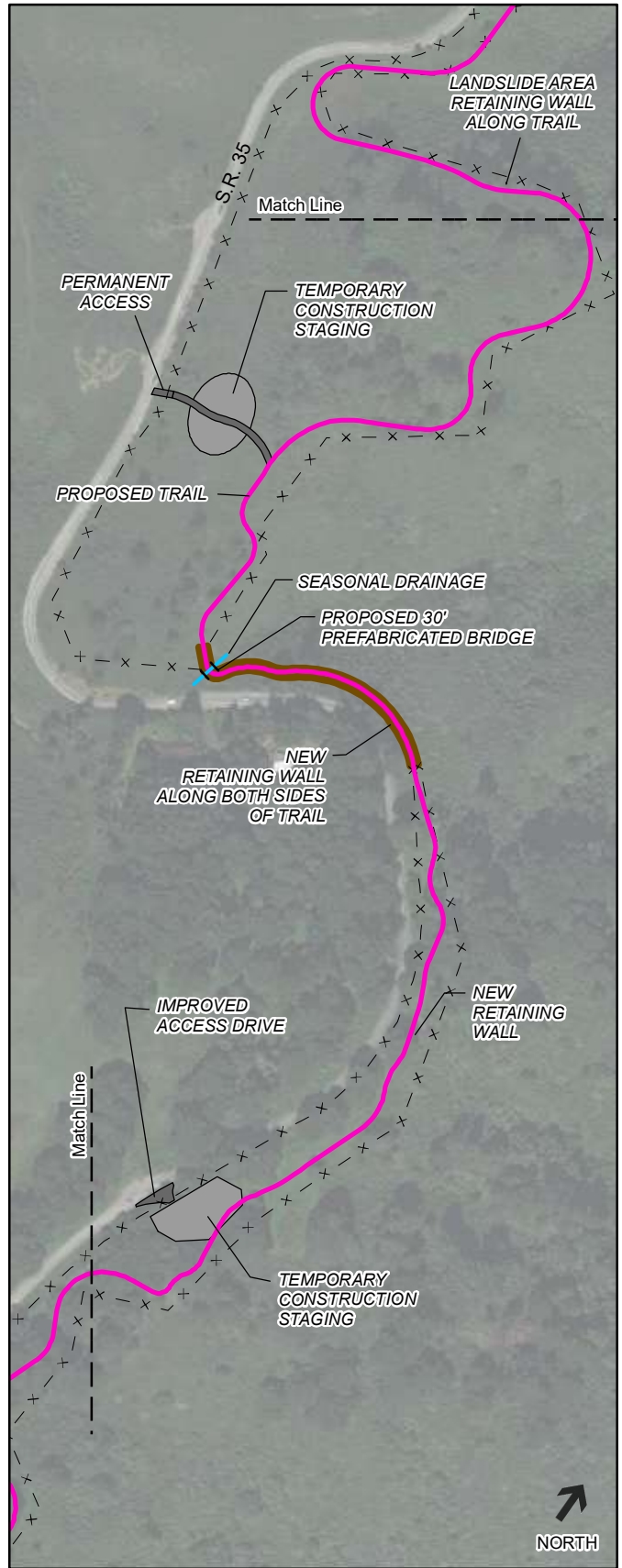
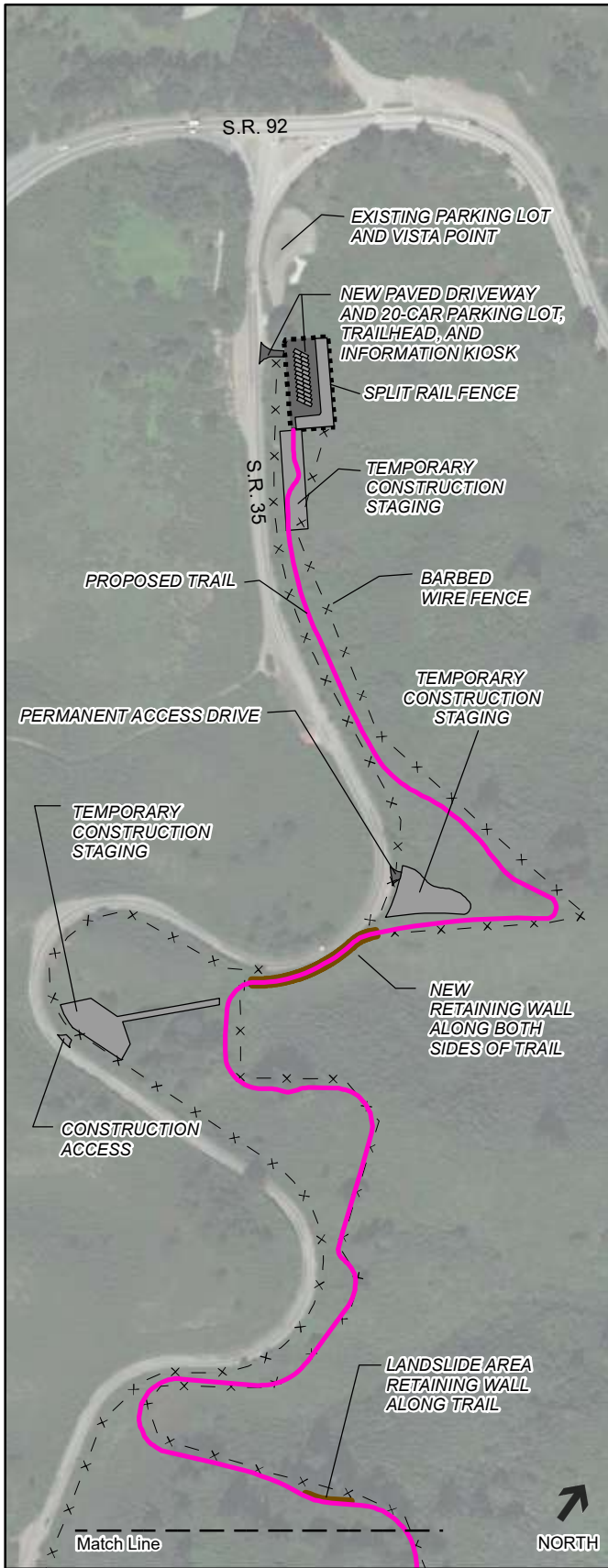
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO - PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT D

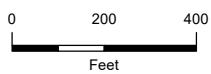


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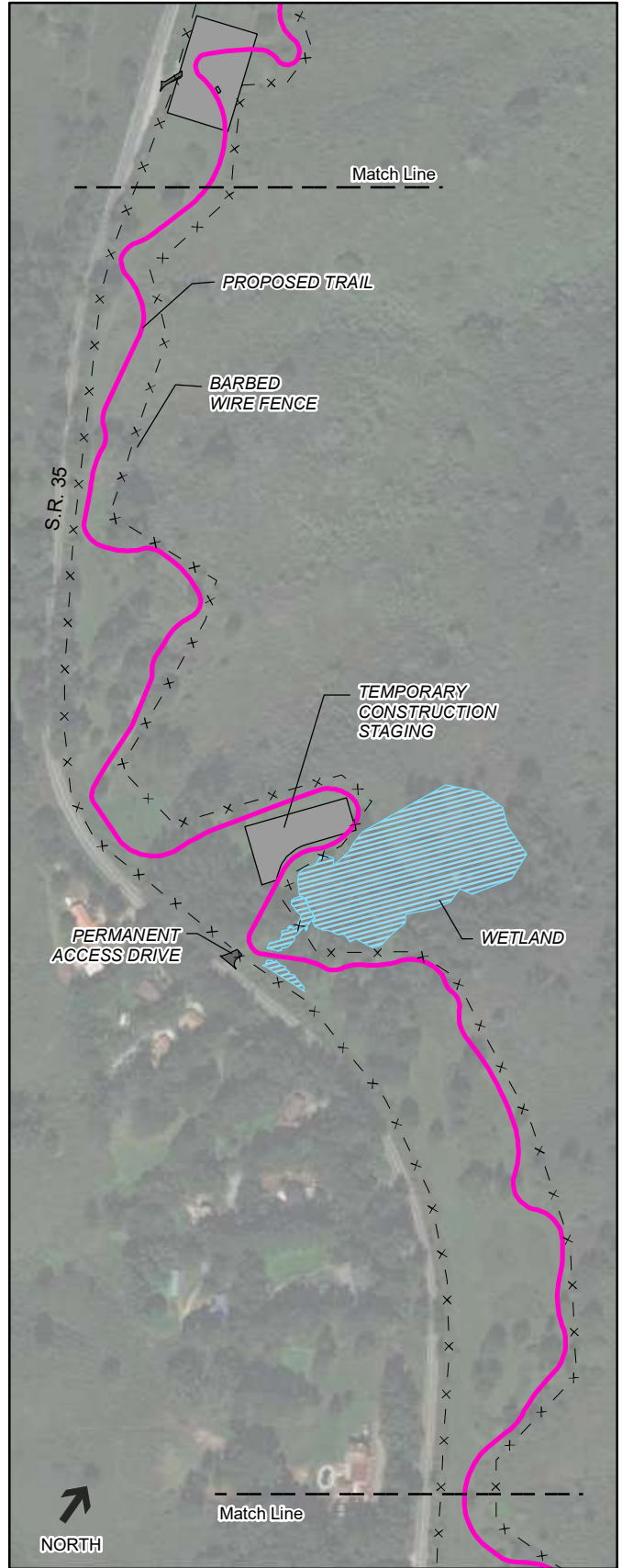
Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-3a
 Index Map



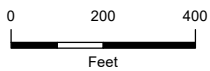
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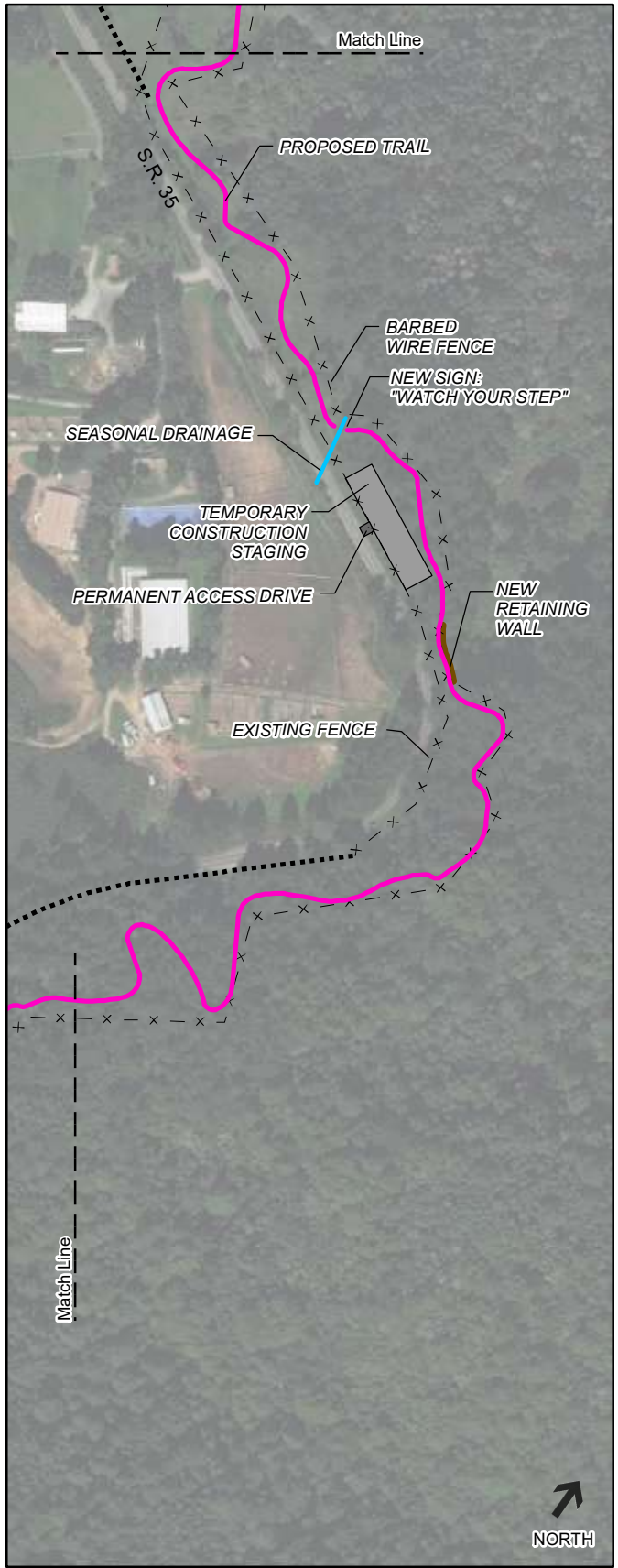
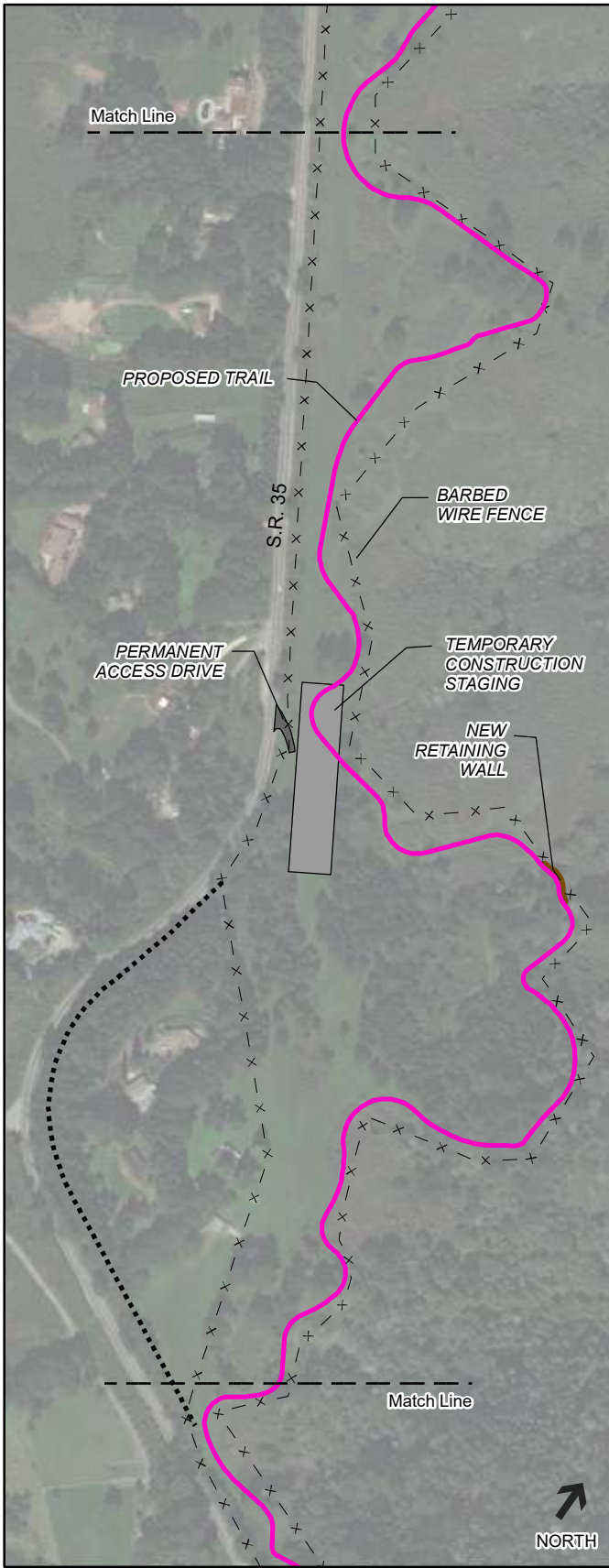
Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-3b
 Proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail



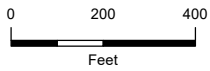
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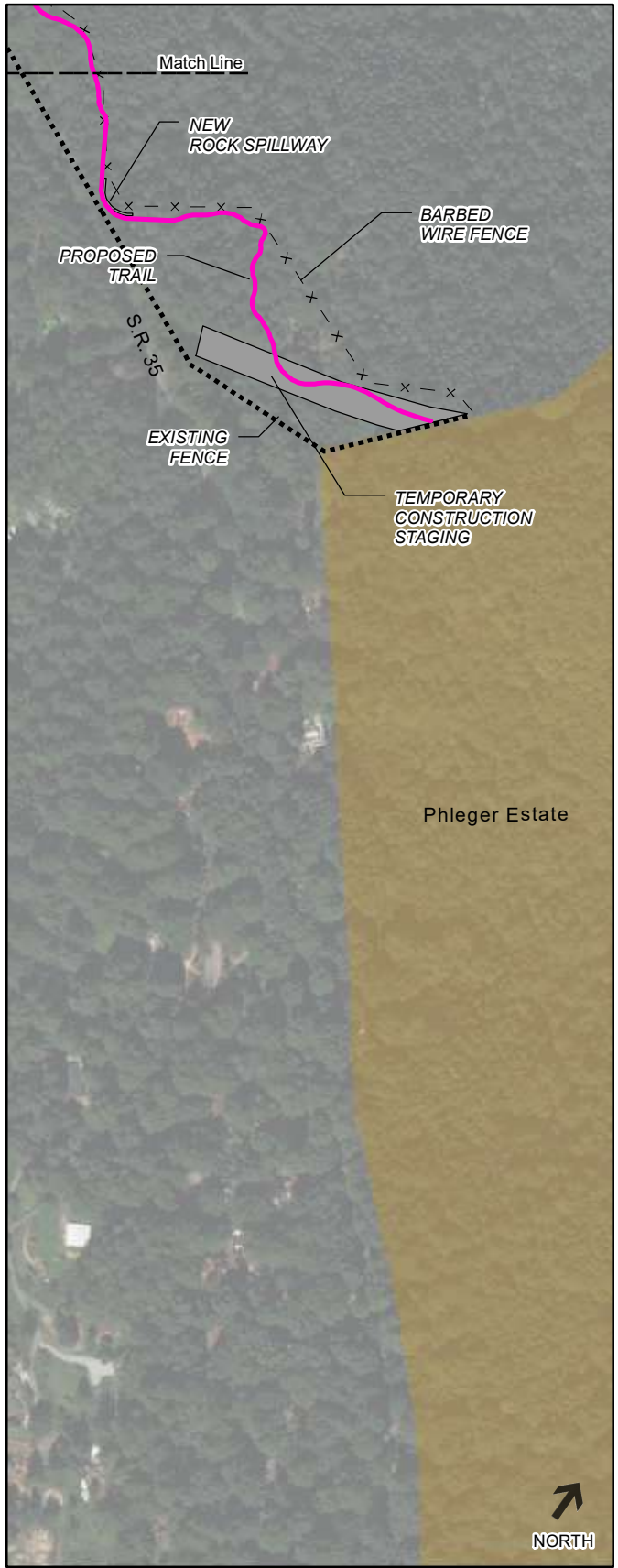
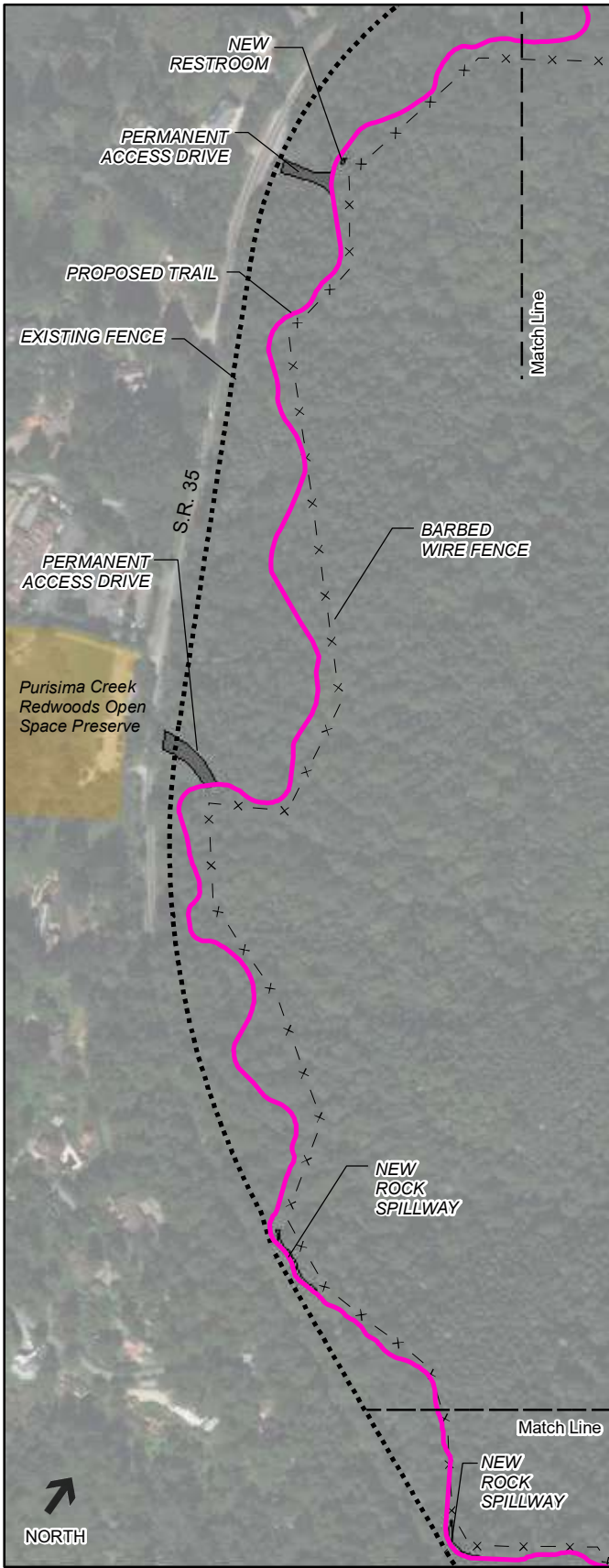
Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-3c
 Proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail



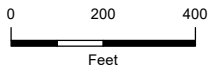
SOURCE: ESRI; ESA



Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-3d
 Proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail



SOURCE: ESRI; ESA

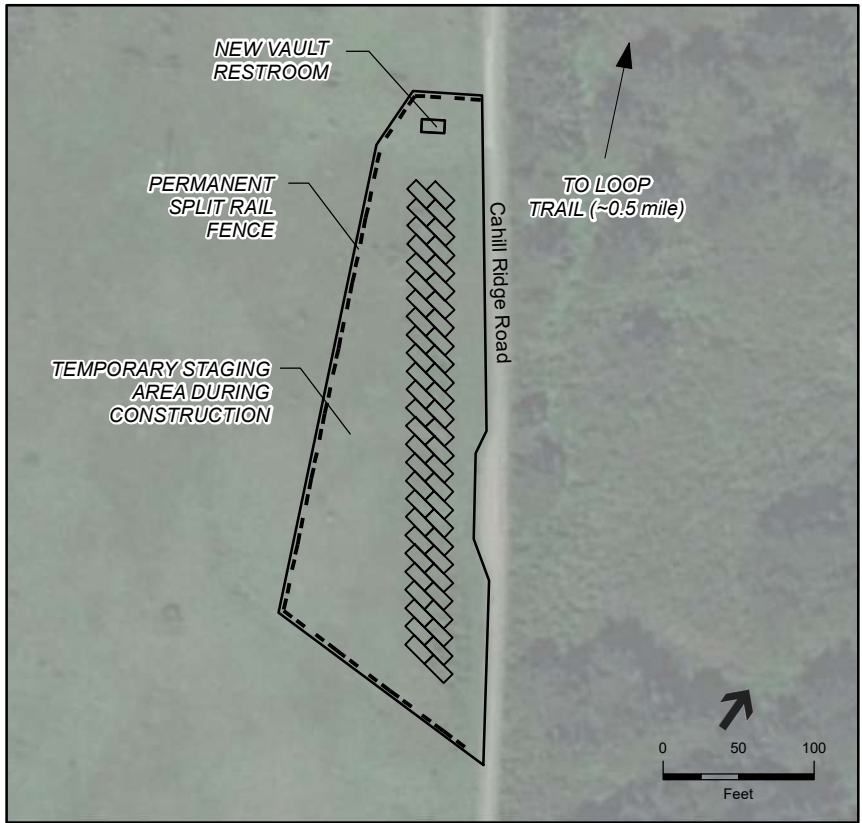
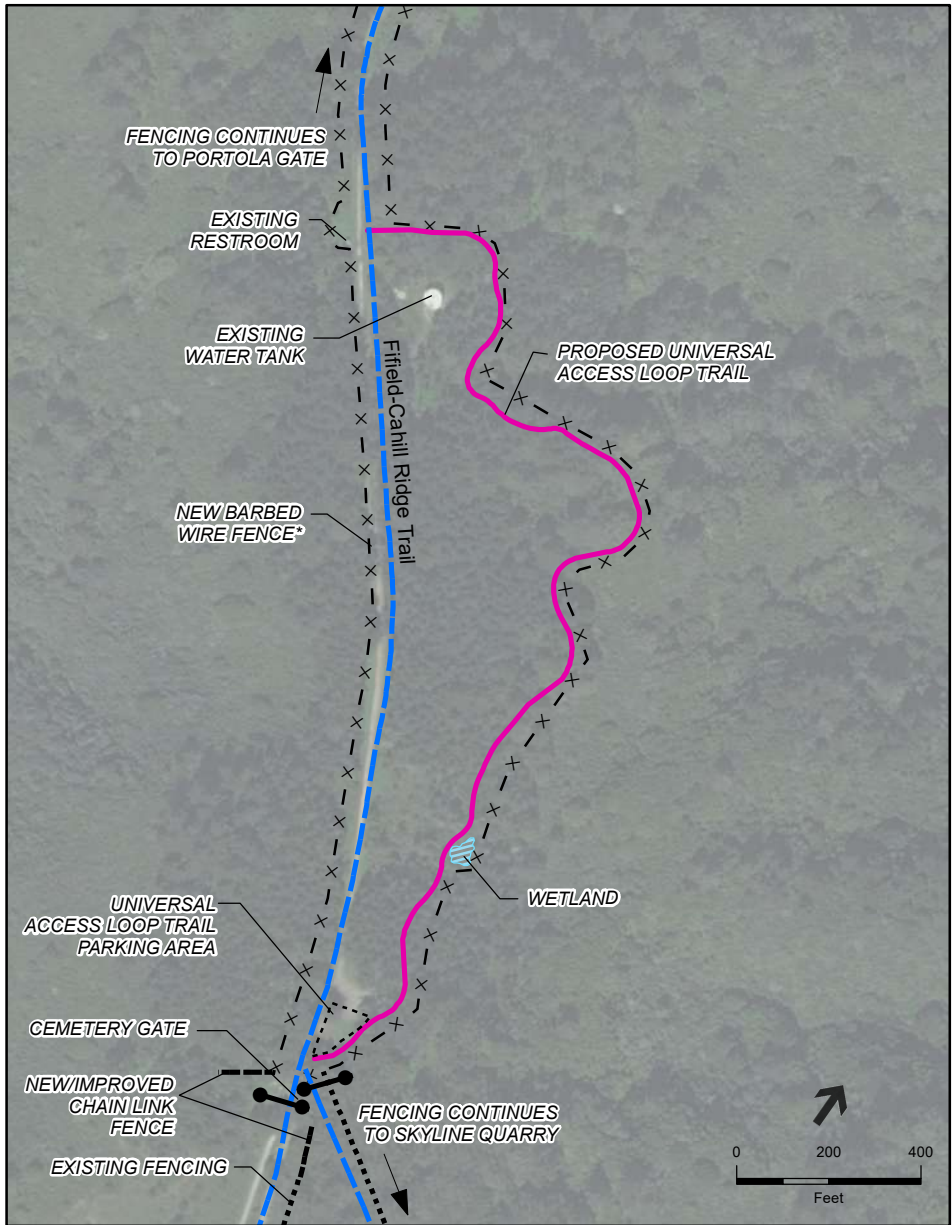


Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-3e
 Proposed Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO - PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT E



* Barbed wire fencing would be installed only under variant 2 (unsupervised/unrestricted access), and variant 3 (unsupervised/restricted access)

SOURCE: ESRI; ESA

Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension
Figure 2-4
 Proposed Fifeild-Cahill Ridge Trail Improvements