7. NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

7

This Natural Resources and Conservation Element described natural resources in Hollister today and focuses on policies and actions for the City of Hollister to preserve natural and cultural resources, improve air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This section presents goals, policies, and actions for the following topics:

Photo by Valera Key

7.1 HOLLISTER TODAY

7.1.1 Biological Resources

Hollister is rich with diverse habitats. While much of the Planning Area has been urbanized as Hollister has grown over the past 150 years, the remaining agricultural lands on the broad alluvial plain of the San Benito River Valley, the riparian woodlands along San Benito River and Santa Ana Creek, and the rolling grasslands and grazing lands to the east and south, are valued resources for Hollister's wildlife. Protection of sensitive biological resources, and restoration or enhancement of damaged habitats is important for the continued health of Hollister's natural environment. The Biological and Wetland Resources Background Report,[1] prepared as part of the General Plan 2040 Update process, provides a review of the known resources in the General Plan Planning Area.

[1] Environmental Collaborative, 2020. *City of Hollister General Plan 2040, Biological and Wetland Resources Background Report.*

Hollister is in the Pajaro River watershed, which covers approximately 1,300 square miles and ultimately flows to Monterey Bay. The watershed spans four counties—San Benito, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey. The Pajaro River is the largest coastal stream between San Francisco Bay and the Salinas River. The watershed's large size contributes to the number of diverse environments, physical features, and land uses in the watershed. Tributaries to the Pajaro River, the largest of which is the San Benito River, serve as the major routes for surface flow and drainage throughout the watershed.

Protection of the creeks and wetlands, and the plants and animals that live in and near them, can be achieved by managing public access along these areas and by minimizing encroachment by new development to only that which is unavoidable. This can be accomplished by preserving buffer areas along creeks and drainage-ways, associated riparian areas, and wetlands. Another way to protect creeks is to improve public access points so that uncontrolled foot traffic does not damage these sensitive habitats.

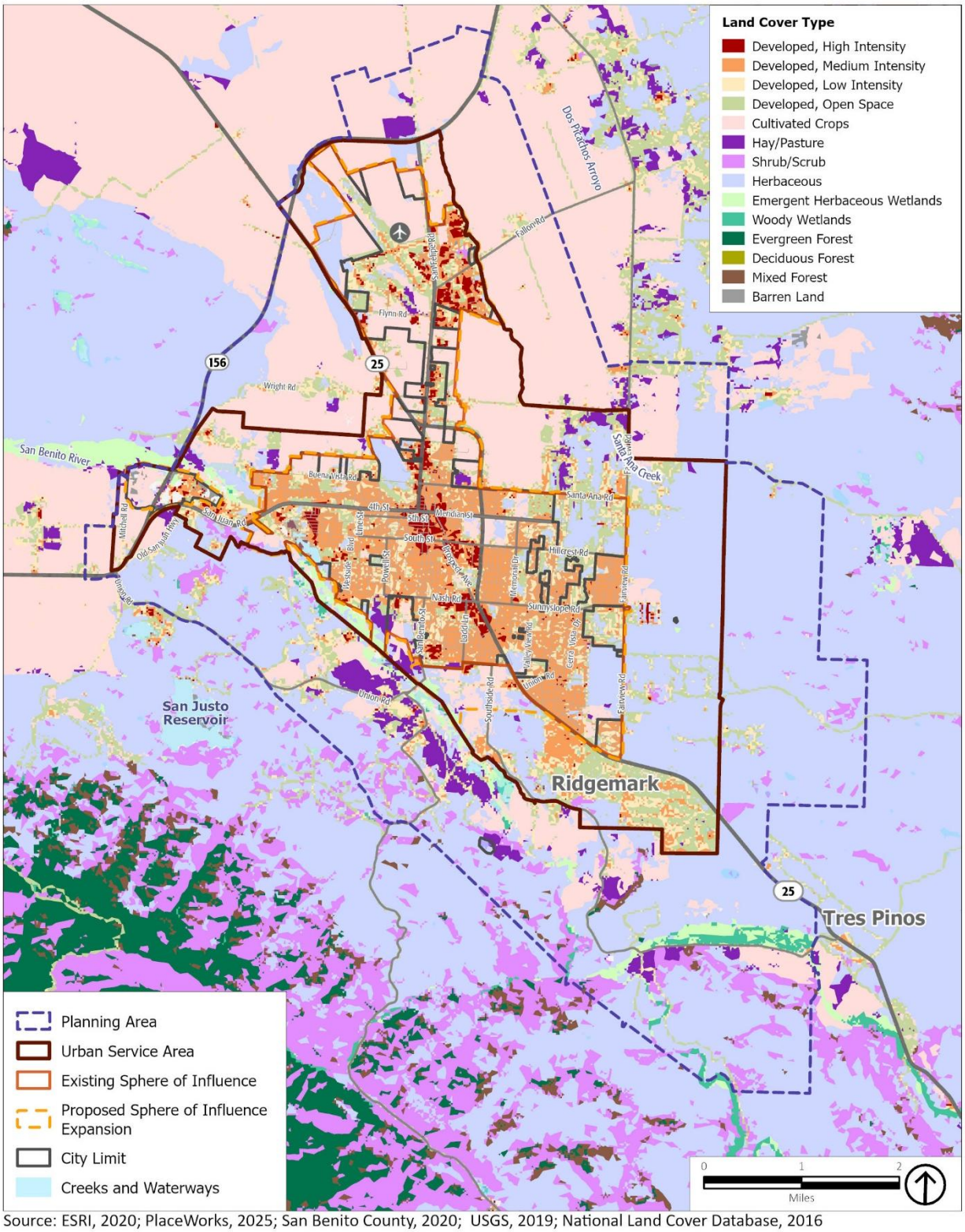
Photo by Jenny Knerr

7.1.1.1 Habitat Types

Vegetation, fish, and wildlife habitat are essential to the community of Hollister. As development pressures grow, the need for preservation of the valuable diversity of species becomes increasingly important. The City recognizes the ecological, scientific, aesthetic, and cultural values of special-status species, as well as their inherent and legal right to exist without undue disturbance. Protection of species with legal protective status also extends to the habitat that supports populations of those species, consistent with the requirements of state and federal law. By providing protection to non-listed special-status species, the City is recognizing the need to contribute to the protection of native plants and animals, and their habitats, before their populations are so low that they must be listed as threatened or endangered under the state and federal Endangered Species Acts.

Figure NRC-1 shows the various vegetation cover types in the General Plan Planning Area vicinity according to the National Land Cover Database. Habitat types differ in their relative value as wildlife habitat and can be characterized by both vegetative cover and associated animal species that are dependent on that habitat, although some wildlife species may use more than one habitat type. The riparian habitat areas in Hollister support a large number of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. Non-native and native grasslands support a variety of mammals, birds, and reptiles. The forest and woodland cover in Hollister provide nesting and foraging opportunities for numerous species of birds, including raptors. Irrigated row crops occupy a majority of the agricultural lands in the Planning Area and a number of small mammals and birds frequent many of the crops.

Figure NRC-1 Vegetation Cover Types



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019; National Land Cover Database, 2016

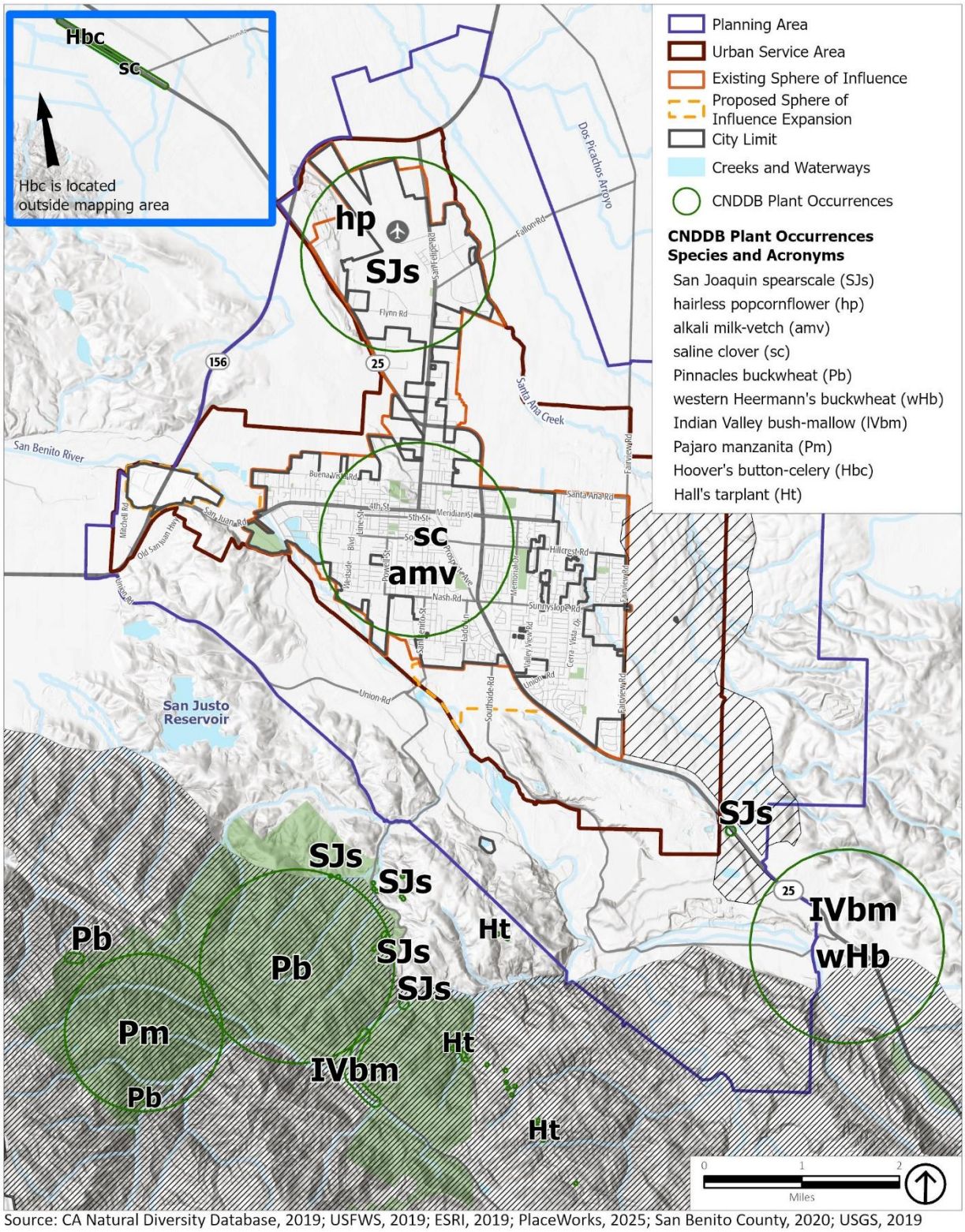
7.1.1.2 Special-Status Species

Special-status species are plants and animals that are legally protected under the state and/or federal Endangered Species Acts or other regulations, as well as other species that are considered rare enough by the scientific community and trustee agencies to warrant special consideration, particularly with regard to protection of isolated populations, nesting or denning locations, communal roosts, and other essential habitat. Species with legal protection under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts often represent major constraints to development, particularly when they are wide-ranging or highly sensitive to habitat disturbance and where proposed development would result in "take" of these species.

Based on the review of available data, there are a total of 23 special-status plant species that have been reported from or in the vicinity of the General Plan Planning Area. As shown in Figure NRC-2, mapping prepared by the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) shows the known occurrences of nine of these most closely monitored special-status species. Many of the special-status plant occurrences in the General Plan Planning Area are vulnerable to off-road vehicle use, disturbance associated with fire and fuel-reduction activities, competition with invasive species, and other threats. There remains a possibility that additional populations of one or more species occurs on the remaining undeveloped lands in the General Plan Planning Area. Detailed surveys would be required to provide confirmation on presence or absence from undeveloped portions of the General Plan Planning Area where suitable habitat is present and thorough studies have not been conducted.

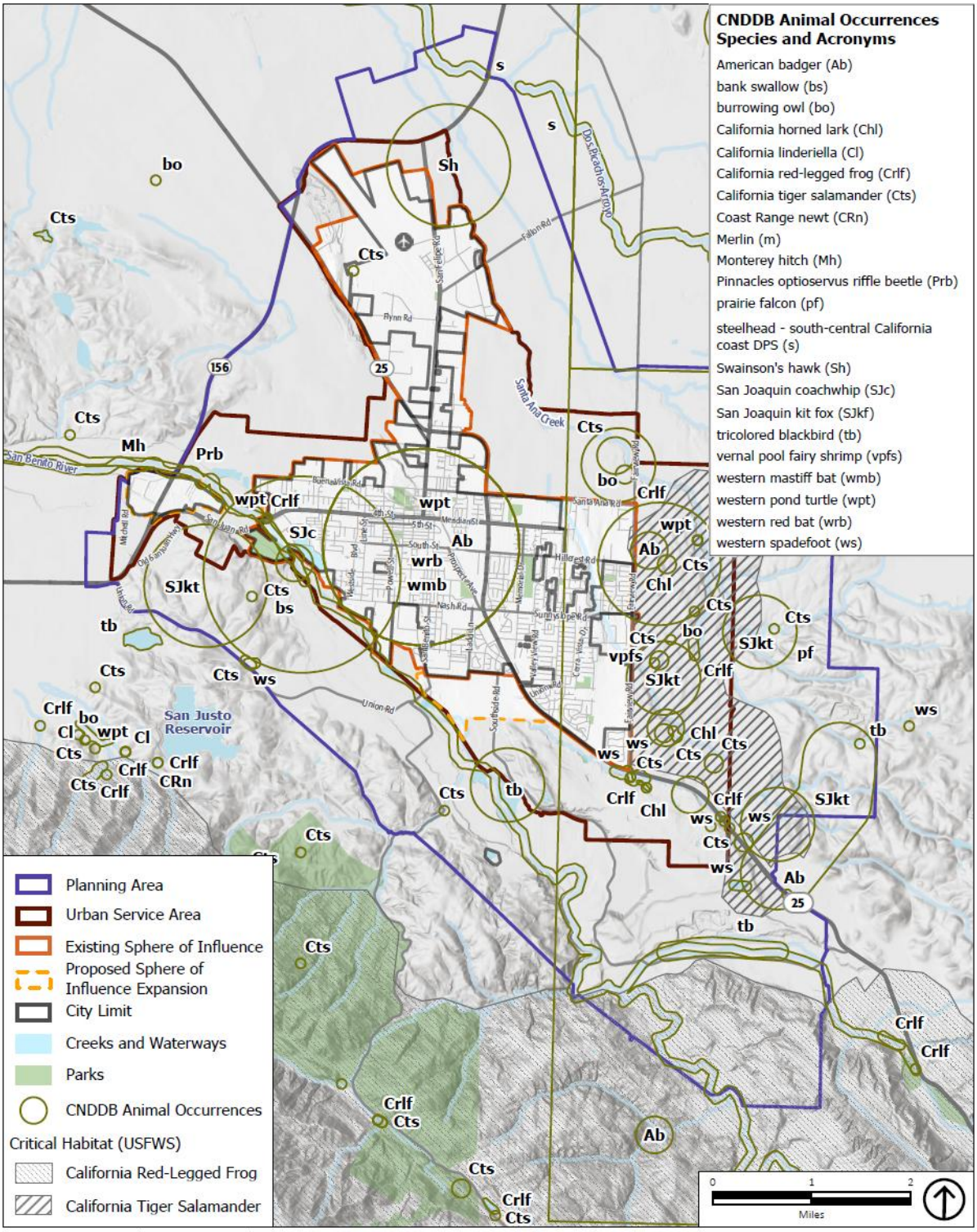
Based on a review of available data, a total of 40 special-status animal species are known or suspected to potentially occur in the vicinity of Hollister. As indicated in Figure NRC-3, a total of 17 of these most closely monitored special-status animal species have been reported by the CNDDB in or near the General Plan Planning Area. Occurrences of other special-status species, particularly the numerous special-status bird species known from San Benito County, may occur in or frequent the Planning Area. Detailed surveys would be required to provide confirmation on presence or absence of special-status animal species where suitable habitat remains in the Planning Area. Several special-status species are of particular concern because of their protected legal status and known distribution in the Hollister vicinity. Additionally, the Planning Area outside the City limits contains "critical habitat" designated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the Redlegged Frog and the California Tiger Salamander, as depicted in Figure NRC-3.

Figure NRC-2 Special-Status Plant Species



Source: CA Natural Diversity Database, 2019; USFWS, 2019; ESRI, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019

Figure NRC-3 Special-Status Animal Species and Critical Habitat



Source: CA Natural Diversity Database, 2019; USFWS, 2019; ESRI, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019

San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) is listed as a federally endangered and state-threatened species. The San Joaquin kit fox was once widely distributed throughout the native grasslands that formerly occupied the low rolling hills around the San Joaquin, Salinas, Santa Clara, and San Benito Valleys. The nearest sighting of a San Joaquin kit fox in relation to the Hollister Planning Area occurred in 1972, when one was seen approximately 3,000 feet east of the southeast corner of the Planning Area. However, San Joaquin kit fox is known to range within two miles of sightings, and San Benito County has designated the area east of Fairview Road as a potential San Joaquin kit fox habitat area. Agricultural operations and, more recently, urban development, have eliminated or fragmented their habitat, resulting in a substantial decline in numbers. As shown in Figure NRC-3, occurrences of this subspecies have been reported in the southwestern, southeastern, and eastern margins of the General Plan Planning Area where development remains sparse.

In addition, the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) and California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) are both listed as special-status species that occur in the Planning Area. California tiger salamander is a state and federally listed threatened species. It has been reported at the periphery of Hollister, including the eastern hills, the plains along the San Benito River corridor, and in the vicinity of the Hollister airport. The USFWS has designated the hillsides in the eastern hills, generally east of Fairview Road, as Critical Habitat for the California tiger salamander (see Figure NRC-3). Occurrences of California red-legged frog, which is federally listed as threatened and recognized as a California Species of Special Concern by CDFW, have also been reported in the Planning Area along the San Benito River, Santa Ana Creek, and drainages with suitable habitat in the eastern and southwestern hills. Designated Critical Habitat for the California red-legged frog occurs in the southern and southwestern portion of the General Plan Planning Area, extending south of Tres Pinos through the Gabilan Mountains.

Photo of San Joaquin kit fox from USFWS

Photo of California tiger salamander from USFWS

Photo of California red-legged frog from USFWS

Photo of burrowing owl from Jeri Krueger/USFWS

7.1.1.3 Sensitive Habitats

Sensitive habitat types in the General Plan Planning Area include remnant native grasslands, wetlands, and areas with specific types of forest and scrub cover. Native grasslands could occur in some locations of the herbaceous land cover shown in Figure NRC-1. Well-developed stands of riparian woodland and scrub (mapped as woody wetlands) are considered a sensitive habitat that supports a large number of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species and tend to have high wildlife habitat values. Freshwater marsh (mapped as emergent herbaceous wetlands) is also of high habitat value to wildlife, providing a source of drinking water, protective cover, nesting substrate, and serving as movement corridors for species. The forest areas shown in

Figure NRC-1 could provide nesting and foraging opportunities for numerous species of birds, including raptors. They also provide essential food resources for acorn woodpeckers (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), scrub jay, and other birds.

Sensitive Natural Communities

Sensitive natural communities are community types recognized by CDFW and other agencies because of their rarity. Sensitive natural community types known from or suspected to occur in the General Plan Planning Area include several associations of Black Oak Forests and Woodlands, California Bay Forests and Woodlands, California Buckeye Woodlands, several associations of Coyote Brush Scrub, freshwater marsh, freshwater seeps and springs, and numerous alliances of native grasslands. Occurrences of these sensitive natural community types may be present in the herbaceous land cover, woody and emergent herbaceous wetlands, and the forest areas shown in Figure NRC-1. Detailed surveys would be required to provide confirmation on presence or absence of any sensitive natural community types from undeveloped portions of the Planning Area.

Jurisdictional Wetlands

State and federal agencies have regulatory authority over wetlands and unvegetated other waters that fall within their jurisdiction. Wetlands are generally considered to be areas that are periodically or permanently inundated by surface or groundwater and support vegetation adapted to life in saturated soil. Wetlands are fragile, natural resources subject to flooding, erosion, soil-bearing capacity limitations, and other hazards. In addition, they are resources of special significance due to the modulation of flood waters, water quality, and habitat functions they perform, and their importance for floodwater storage, floodwater passage, aquifer recharge, erosion control, pollution control, wildlife habitat, education, scientific study, open space, and recreation. Figure NRC-4 shows the extent of wetlands mapped in the Planning Area as part of the National Wetlands Inventory, as defined by the USFWS. Additional wetlands and other regulated waters may be present in other locations in the Planning Area and would require a formal wetland delineation to verify presence or absence.

7.1.1.4 Heritage Trees

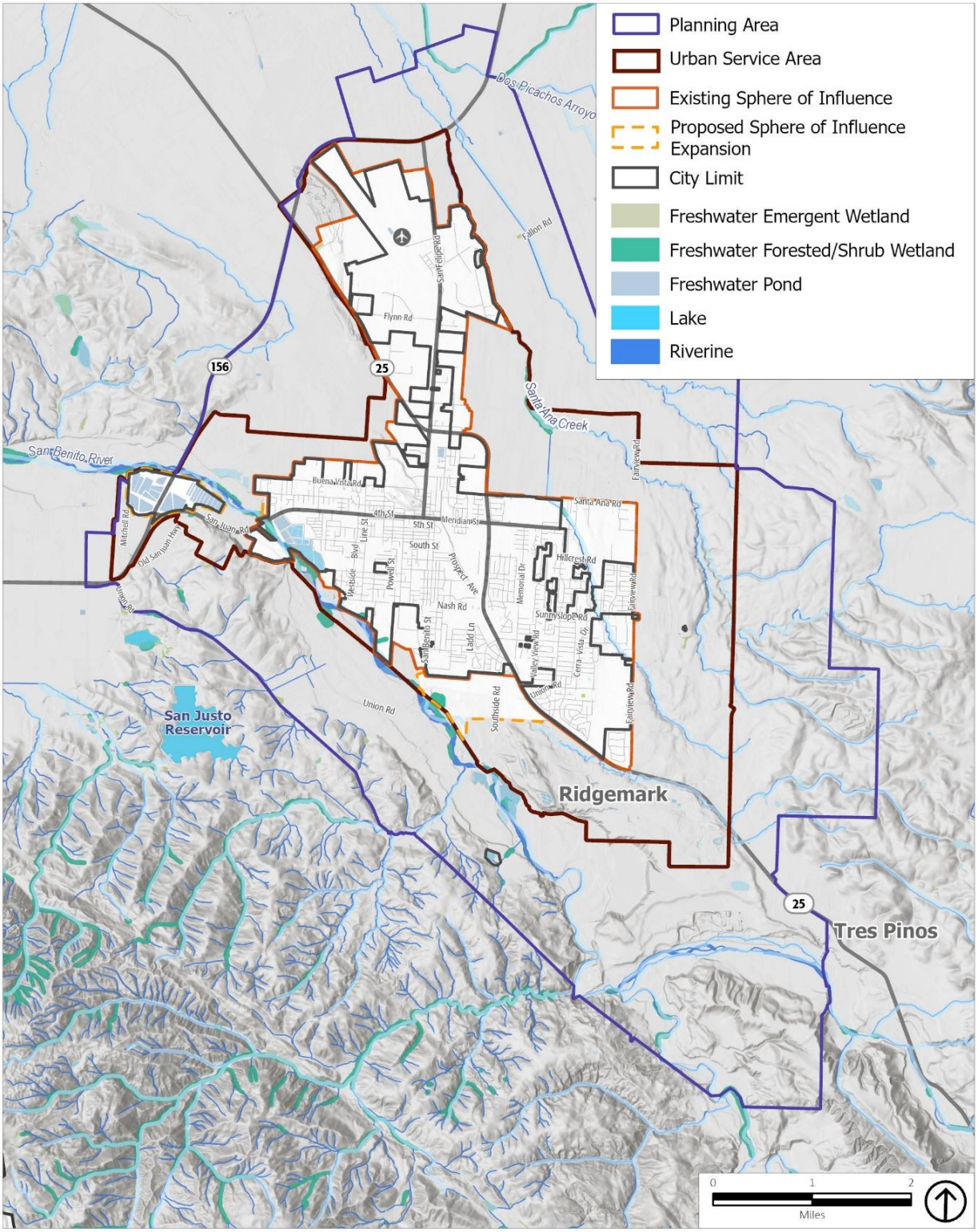
Heritage trees are trees that provide special significance to the community based on historical, environmental, or aesthetic value. The preservation of heritage trees enhances the attractiveness of the city, protects against extreme temperatures, encourages quality development, and helps increase property values. Policies and regulations can control the removal and preservation of heritage trees in Hollister to ensure there is a sizable population of large, healthy trees for the long term.

7.1.1.5 Connectivity Areas, Permeability, and Natural Landscape Areas

California law requires that the General Plan identify and address areas providing connectivity for wildlife, habitat permeability, and natural landscape areas. The State's the BIOS Habitat Connectivity Viewer shows no essential connectivity areas in the Planning Area. However, there are natural habitat areas in the Planning Area, such as creek corridors and large open spaces. These areas can be seen in **Figure NRC-5**.

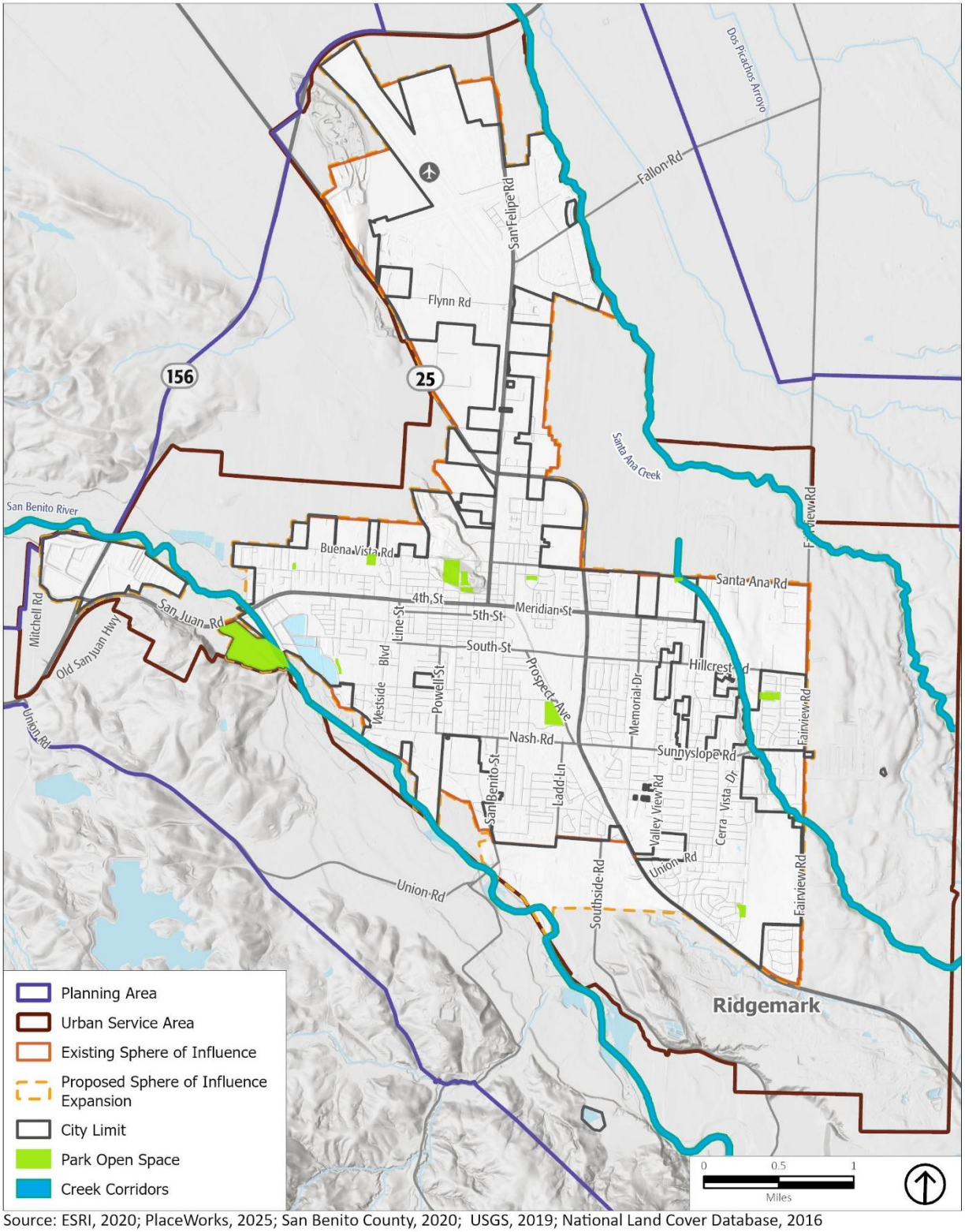
Permeability refers to the ability of a feature, improvement, or facility to provide for passage of wildlife and improve connectivity to natural landscape areas or other habitats. Generally, barriers such as infrastructure or incompatible land uses impede wildlife movement or population connectivity between habitat areas. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2022) prepared a report highlighting areas of the State of highest priority for habitat connectivity. No areas in Hollister, or in Benito County, were identified as priority areas in the report. The 2022 Department of Fish and Wildlife report highlights some examples to improve permeability, such as fences, underpasses, "jump outs" (escape ramps over roadways designed with high fences above the roadway to deter animals from jumping onto the roadway and shorter fences on the safe side to allow animals to safely jump), and bridges. These features are generally not present or needed in Hollister given the topography and lack of major roadways through Hollister.

Figure NRC-4 National Wetlands Inventory



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019

Figure NRC-5 Permeability and Natural Landscape Areas



Source: ESRI, 2020; PlaceWorks, 2025; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019; National Land Cover Database, 2016

Photo by Jenny Knerr

7.1.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

Hollister is within the ancestral lands of the Ohlone (also known as Costanoan) people, which ranges from the Carquinez Strait to the southern border of Monterey Bay and extends 50 miles inland. Loosely united by related languages and histories, the Ohlone people have never constituted a single political or cultural entity. Prior to European settlement, Ohlone peoples spoke at least eight distinctive language dialects and were organized into roughly 50 documented villages and extended family groups.

Evidence suggests that the Ausaima Indians, who were part of the Ohlone linguistic group, have dwelt in the vicinity of the Planning Area since 5,000 B.C. Ohlones lived in tribelets, or autonomous territory-dependent political units, ranging from 50 to 500 people in size. Labor was divided between hunting and gathering based on gender; where women gathered a variety of nuts, seeds, and berries, while men hunted numerous creek, shore, and terrestrial species. Larger mammals were hunted with the bow and arrow and devised communal drives and nets for smaller game. Resources were distributed via trade networks, but Ohlone groups imported relatively few goods: pinyon nuts and obsidian. In exchange for these goods, Ohlone exported mussels, salt, olivella shells, abalone, and bows to the Sierra Miwok and Yokuts tribes.

Spanish colonials came to settle in the Bay Area and on the Central Coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, displacing the Ohlone people and their cultures. In 1797, Mission San Juan Bautista, one of the many missions constructed along the California coast during this time period, was established by Franciscan Missionaries who sought to convert indigenous peoples to Catholicism and eliminate traditional cultural practices and beliefs. During this period of Mexican and European colonization, cultural and spiritual traditions of the Ohlone people were forced into dormancy or secrecy.

In 1839, Rancho San Justo was established by a land grant from the Mexican government. Shortly after, in 1868, 50 farmers established the San Justo Homestead Association and used their joint power to purchase 21,000 acres of land from Colonel William Hollister, a sheep rancher. The San Justo Homestead Association subdivided the land into homesteads, setting aside 100 acres for a town site. The city was incorporated that same year.

Today, there is a diverse spectrum of culturally and politically active Ohlone families and tribes in the region. Tribal cultural resources often are less tangible than merely an object of the site itself. Sometimes, the importance is tied to views of or access to a sacred site. Therefore, consultation with culturally affiliated Native American tribes is key to identifying tribal cultural resources.

It is likely that there are undiscovered and unrecorded archaeological and tribal resources in Hollister's Sphere of Influence. The General Plan includes policy direction to support the tribal consultation process required by State law and requires preconstruction investigation of potential tribal cultural resources if they are found on development sites.

7.1.3 Air Quality

Hollister is in the northwest sector of the North Central Coast Air Basin. Air pollutant emissions generated by stationary sources in Hollister are subject to the rules and regulations imposed by the Monterey Bay Air Resources District. The air quality monitoring station closest to the city is the Hollister-Fairview Road Monitoring Station, which monitors ozone, coarse particulates, and fine particulates pollution. The most current five years of data monitored at this station show recurring violations of both the state and federal ozone standards. Furthermore, exceptional events, like wildfires, can affect air quality in the North Central Coast Air Basin. Wildfires can temporarily elevate concentrations of particulate matter. When wildfires affect air quality, Monterey Bay Air Resources District monitors and provides information to the public about air quality levels.

Some land uses are considered more sensitive to air pollution than others due to the types of population groups or activities involved. Sensitive receptors are facilities where sensitive population groups are likely to be located. These facilities include schools, retirement homes, convalescent homes, hospitals, and medical clinics. Sensitive population groups include children, the elderly, the acutely ill, and the chronically ill, especially those with cardio-respiratory diseases. The California Air Resources Board provides recommendations on the location of sensitive land uses in proximity to freeways, distribution centers, rail yards, ports, refineries, chrome-plating facilities, dry cleaners, and gasoline-dispensing facilities.

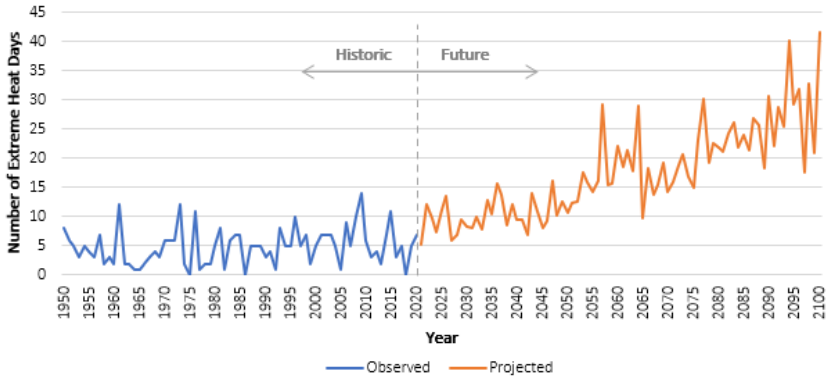
7.1.4 Climate Change

Climate is the long-term average of weather conditions, such as temperature and precipitation. While it is normal for Earth's climate system to experience long-term shifts in these average conditions, recent human activity is causing global climate change at an exponential rate. Figure NRC-6 shows the past and projected extreme heat days in Hollister. These activities, predominately the burning of fossil fuels, emit heat-trapping gases called greenhouse gases (GHGs) that build up in the atmosphere. As GHG levels increase, Earth's atmosphere traps more heat, triggering changes in the global climate system that may have serious and potentially catastrophic impacts on people, physical assets, and natural systems The General Plan Sphere of Influence is susceptible to several climate-related hazards, which include flooding, extreme heat, drought, and wildfire.

Photo by Jenny Knerr

The City's Climate Action Plan identifies additional strategies to reduce GHG emissions to meet State reduction targets and help lessen the impacts of climate change. Climate action planning can also provide indirect benefits to the community by implementing GHG reduction strategies that are also aimed at improving resiliency. These benefits may include a healthier and more robust economy, cost savings from lower energy and resource use, improved public health, and greater community equity, among many others.

Figure NRC-6 Past and Projected Extreme Heat Days in Hollister



Sources: Cal-Adapt, 2021; National Weather Service, 2022.

Photo by Jenny Knerr

7.1.5 Water Quality and Water Conservation

There are three significant surface water features in the Planning Area: the San Benito River, Santa Ana Creek, and an unnamed tributary of Santa Ana Creek, as shown on Figure NRC-6. The San Benito River flows from southeast to northwest in the southern portion of the Planning Area. Much of the Planning Area drains northerly to Santa Ana Creek and its unnamed tributary; Santa Ana Creek flows into San Felipe Lake, approximately seven miles north of the Hollister Municipal Airport. Annual rainfall, most of which takes place during the fall and winter, generally dictates the amount of surface water in local stream systems.

The Planning Area overlies the North San Benito Groundwater Basin. Groundwater recharge occurs mostly through infiltration from streams (mainly the San Benito River and Tres Pinos Creek south of Hollister).

Surface water quality is affected by point source and non-point source pollutants. Point source pollutants are those emitted at a specific point, such as a pipe, while non-point source pollutants are typically generated by surface runoff from diffuse sources, such as streets, paved areas, and landscaped areas. Non-point source pollution is caused by rainfall moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into bodies

of water. Best management practices are guidelines used to ensure that project design, construction, and maintenance are conducted to control urban runoff and minimize the impact on the surrounding environment.

Maintaining and improving water quality is essential to protect public health, wildlife, and watersheds, and to ensure opportunities for public recreation and economic development in Hollister. Water pollution can be dramatically curbed through proactive efforts of residents and through City policies for stormwater management and public participation, education, and appropriately designed development. The City implements State law that requires the use of practices that enable water to percolate into the surrounding soil, instead of letting sediment, metals, pesticides, and chemicals flow directly into creeks or through the storm drain system. Improving the water quality in Hollister's creeks and groundwater is a priority. The City supports efforts to clean up existing areas and prevent further degradation.

Reuse and conservation of water throughout the year helps to provide a reliable source and reduces the need and cost of securing out-of-area supplies. Examples of water conservation measures include aerators for faucets and showerheads, low-flow toilets, irrigation system timers and monitors, drought-tolerant landscaping, and water-efficient dishwashers and washing machines. The City of Hollister also recycles most wastewater in the city with the exception of housing units that are treated by the Ridgemark Wastewater Treatment Plant. Customers who would like to use recycled water must obtain a Recycled Water Use Permit. The recycled water is primarily used for agricultural irrigation, though other approved uses include landscaping irrigation, nonstructural firefighting, and some construction-related activities.

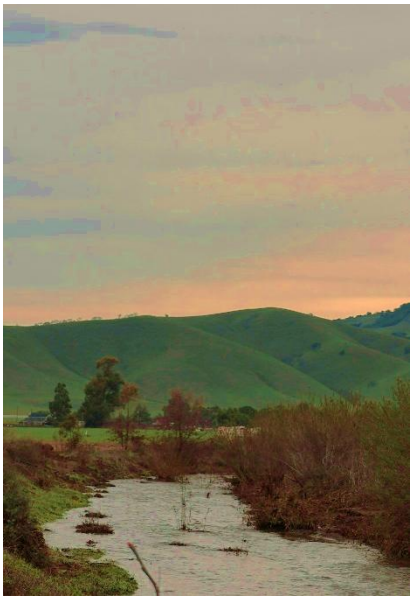
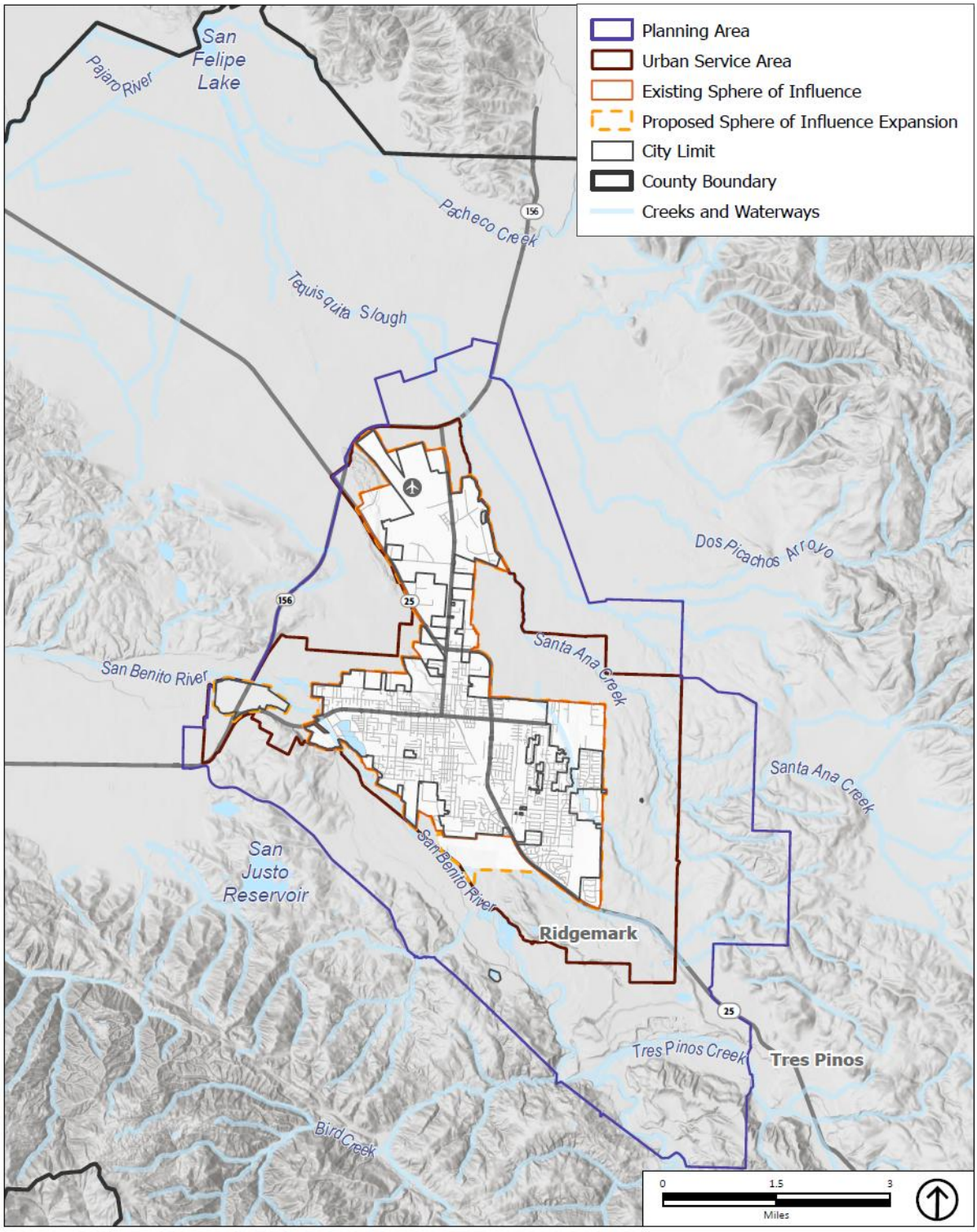


Photo by Jaquelyn Scimeca

Figure NRC-7 Waterways in the Hollister Planning Area



Source: ESRI, 2020; San Benito County, 2020; USGS, 2019; PlaceWorks, 2025

7.1.6 Mineral Resources

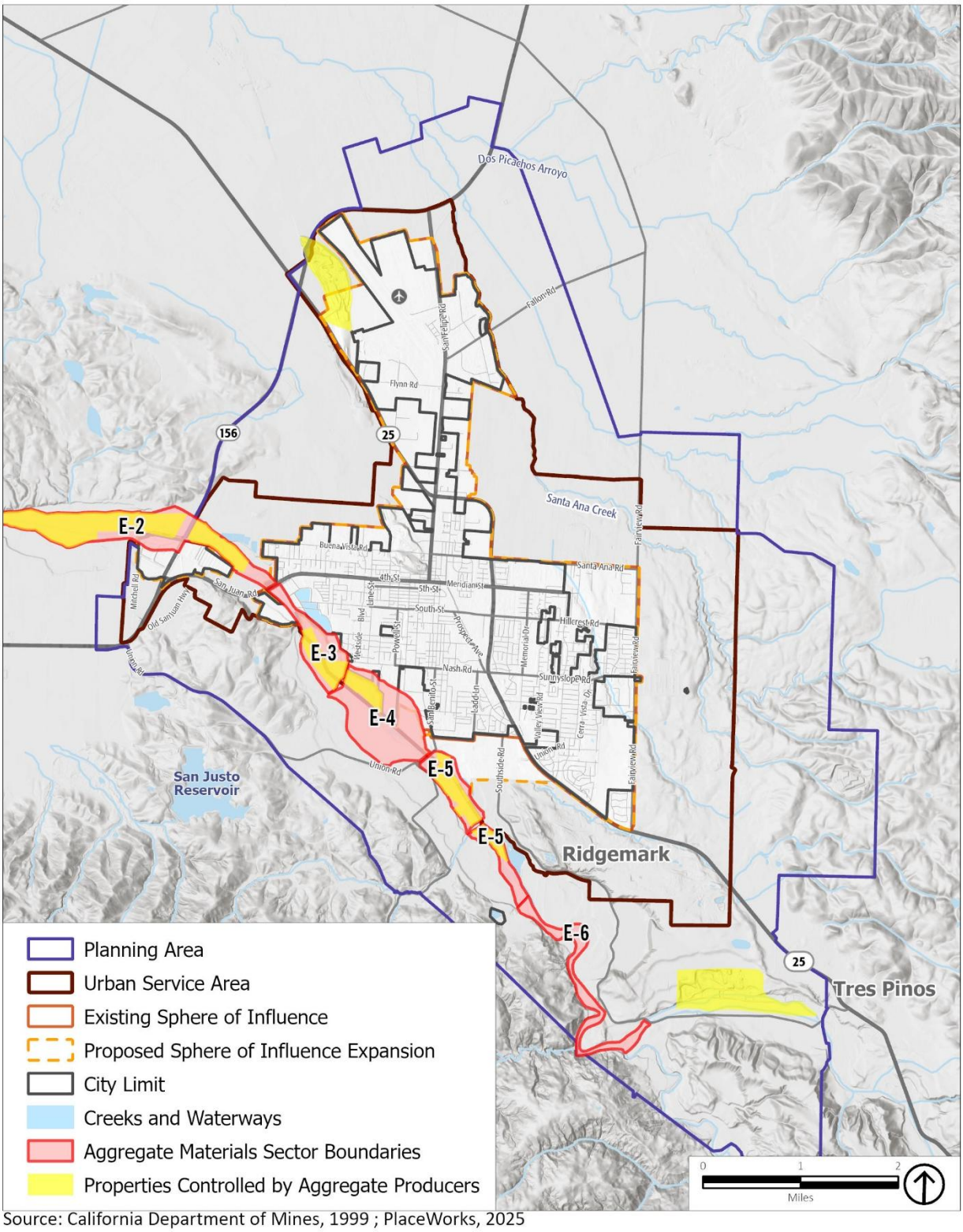
The State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) has designated portions of the Hollister Planning Area as having construction aggregate deposits (sand, gravel, and crushed rock) of regional significance, which are shown on Figure NRC-7. The properties controlled by aggregate producers are also shown in the figure.

The SMGB divides aggregate resources into regions and sectors. The aggregate resource areas in or near Hollister are in Sector E of the Monterey Bay Region and include channel and floodplain mineral deposits along the San Benito River. These resources may be needed to meet future demands in the region.

SMGB policy states that land uses that require a high public or private investment in structures, land improvements, and landscaping, or that would otherwise prevent mining (i.e., high-density residential development, public facilities, intensive industrial and commercial uses) are inherently incompatible with the conservation and extraction of mineral resources. Those land uses that require a low public or private investment in structures, land improvements, and landscaping that would allow mining (i.e., extensive industrial, recreation, agricultural, and open space uses) may be compatible.

Photo by Jenny Knerr

Figure NRC-8 Regionally Significant Construction Aggregate Resource Areas



Source: California Department of Mines, 1999 ; PlaceWorks, 2025

7.2 NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The following section provides goals, policies, and actions relating to natural resources and conservation.

7.2.1 Biological Resources

GOAL NRC-1 Ensure enhanced habitat for native plants and animals, and protection for culturally significant and special-status species.

Policies

Policy NRC-1.1 **Protection of Environmental Resources.** Protect or enhance environmental resources, such as wetlands, creeks and drainage-ways, sensitive natural communities, and habitat for special-status species.

Policy NRC-1.2 **Protection of Special-Status Species Habitat and Sensitive Natural Communities.** Identify and protect the habitats of special-status species and sensitive natural communities that may found in the Hollister Planning Area, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, through the review of development proposals for compliance with regulations of these agencies and the California Environmental Quality Act.

Policy NRC-1.3 **Other Habitat Planning Measures.** Use regional planning concepts, such as mitigation banking, to offset the cumulative effects of piecemeal development on the habitat of special-status species.

Policy NRC-1.4 **Specialized Surveys for Special-Status Species and Sensitive Natural Communities.** Require that sites with suitable natural habitat, including creek corridors through urbanized areas, be surveyed for special-status species and sensitive natural communities prior to development approval as part of the environmental review process. Such surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist and occur prior to development-related vegetation removal. All surveys shall take place during appropriate seasons to determine presence or absence, including nesting or breeding occurrences, with a determination on whether the project site contains suitable habitat for such

Photo by Valera Key

species and sensitive natural community types. These results would inform the site assessment and environmental review process for proposed developments and other activities that could adversely affect special-status species.

Policy NRC-1.5 Biological Site Assessment. Require a biological resource assessment for proposed development on sites with natural habitat conditions that may support special-status species, sensitive natural communities, or regulated wetlands and waters. The assessment shall be prepared prior to project approval and conducted by a qualified biologist to determine the presence or absence of any sensitive resources that could be affected by proposed development, shall provide an assessment of the potential impacts, and shall define measures for protecting the resource and surrounding buffer habitat, in compliance with City policy and state and federal laws. An assessment shall not be necessary for locations where past and existing development have eliminated natural habitat and the potential for presence of sensitive biological resources and regulated waters.

Policy NRC-1.6 Mitigation of Potential Impacts on Special-Status Species and Sensitive Habitat Areas. Require that potential significant impacts on special-status species, occurrences of sensitive natural communities, or regulated wetlands and waters be minimized through adjustments and controls on the design, construction, and operations of a proposed project prior to project approval. Where impacts to these sensitive biological habitat areas are unavoidable, appropriate compensatory mitigation shall be required by the City. Such compensatory mitigation shall be developed and implemented in accordance with City policy and any relevant state and federal regulations. These may include on-site set asides, off-site acquisitions (conservation easements, deed restrictions, etc.), and specific restoration efforts that benefit the special-status species and sensitive habitat areas.

Policy NRC-1.7 Preconstruction Surveys for the San Joaquin Kit Fox. Require preconstruction surveys for the San Joaquin kit fox prior to project approval, in accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines for Preconstruction Surveys for the endangered San Joaquin kit fox, for new developments in the County-designated kit fox habitat area. Development in the habitat area boundaries shall be assessed an impact fee by the County for every home or acre developed.

Policy NRC-1.8 California Red-Legged Frog and California Tiger Salamander Site Assessments. Require site assessments by a qualified biologist to evaluate the potential for proposed projects in identified Critical Habitat areas for the California red-legged frog and/or California tiger salamander to have a negative effect on these species. Such assessments shall be prepared prior to project approval and identify any high-quality habitat for these species and shall be peer reviewed by a second qualified biologist. Protocol surveys may be warranted to confirm presence or absence of these species based on the results of the habitat assessment. Development in areas with identified high-quality occupied habitat shall be avoided. High-quality habit includes sites known to be occupied by the species, breeding habitat, large areas of suitable habitat, and the absence of nearby development.

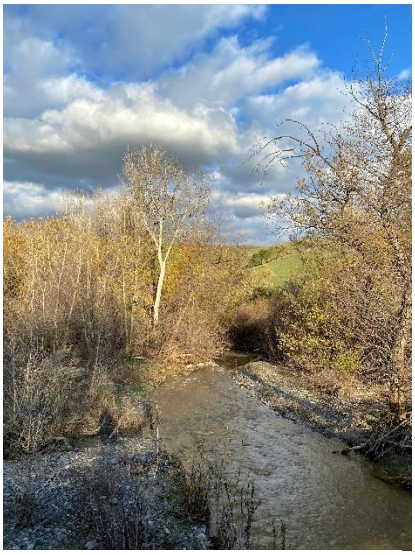


Photo by Jenny Knerr

Policy NRC-1.9 Surveys and Mitigation for Burrowing Owls. Require project applicants with proposed projects on grazing or fallow agricultural land to conduct a survey for burrowing owls in accordance with the latest guidelines of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife prior to project approval. Project applicants in the Fairview Road/Santa Ana Road area shall be required to develop and implement a mitigation plan to avoid or otherwise compensate for any disturbance to the burrowing owl colony in that area. This plan shall be developed in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Policy NRC-1.10 Preconstruction Surveys for Nesting Birds. Require preconstruction surveys for nesting native birds, to be conducted prior to site disturbance by a qualified biologist, for those projects that would affect on-site oaks or orchards, or which would involve vegetation removal and construction during the nesting season (February 1 to August 31). Hollister shall allow no construction activities that would result in the disturbance of an active native bird nest (including tree removal) to proceed until after it has been determined by a qualified biologist that the nest has been abandoned.

Policy NRC-1.11 Maintain a List of Species. Maintain current California Natural Diversity Database digital (Geographic Information System) maps and data tables listing threatened, endangered, and special-status species in the Hollister Planning Area.

Policy NRC-1.12 Riparian Habitat. Maintain existing riparian areas in their natural state to provide for wildlife habitat, groundwater percolation, water quality, aesthetic relief, and recreational uses that are environmentally compatible with wetland preservation.

Policy NRC-1.13 Wetland Preservation. Require appropriate public and private wetlands preservation, restoration, and/or rehabilitation through compensatory mitigation in the development process for unavoidable impacts. Continue the City's practice of requiring mitigation for projects that would affect wetlands in conjunction with requirements of state and federal agencies.

Policy NRC-1.14 Wetlands Delineation. Require a delineation of jurisdictional waters by a qualified wetland specialist at the outset of the project planning stage of any proposed development that may contain wetlands or other regulated waters. This delineation shall be verified and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the Regional Water Quality Control Board where federally regulated waters are absent prior to project approval.

Policy NRC-1.15 Wetland Avoidance. Encourage development projects, which may result in the disturbance of delineated seasonal wetlands and other regulated waters, to be redesigned to avoid such disturbance or to provide adequate compensatory mitigation where avoidance is not feasible.

Policy NRC-1.16 Enhancement of Creeks and Drainageways. Support rewilding and enhancement of drainageways to improve their function as wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, and storm drainage facilities. Require setbacks, creek enhancement, and associated riparian habitat restoration/creation for projects adjacent to creeks to maintain storm flows, reduce erosion and maintenance needs, and improve habitat values. Require all new structures and paved surfaces to be set back from wetlands and creeks. Exceptions may be granted under extenuating circumstances and if also approved by responsible resource agencies.

Policy NRC-1.17 Tree Preservation. Preserve and protect heritage trees and other trees of importance.

Policy NRC-1.18 Replacement Planting. Require replacement planting when heritage trees and trees of importance must be removed.

Policy NRC-1.19 Tree Maintenance. Allow routine maintenance and pruning of heritage trees only when the survival of the tree will not be compromised.

Policy NRC-1.20 Construction Near Heritage Trees. Require that construction activities avoid impacts to heritage trees through construction of barrier fencing, construction worker training from a qualified arborist, and construction monitoring by an arborist. Heritage tree protection measures shall be identified prior to issuance of a building permit for a new development project.

Policy NRC-1.21 Street Trees. Require new development provide street trees of various species along pedestrian corridors and require the installation of root barriers when planting new street trees.

Policy NRC-1.22 Native Trees and Riparian Habitat. Ensure protection of native trees and riparian habitat.

Policy NRC-1.23 Non-Native Plants. Prohibit the planting of invasive, non-native plant species in natural habitats that support special-status species.

Policy NRC-1.24 Support Beneficial Uses through Open Space. Capitalize on opportunities to preserve, enhance, expand and fully integrate the City's network of open space so as to support beneficial uses.

Actions

Photo by Valera Key

Action NRC-1.1 Riparian Habitat Setbacks. Amend the Zoning Code to establish setback requirements from wetlands and creeks.

Action NRC-1.2 Tree Preservation Ordinance. Adopt a Tree Preservation Ordinance that defines heritage trees and other trees of importance and provides for their replacement when removed as part of a new development project. The Tree Preservation Ordinance shall:

- Define the trees to be preserved.
- Establish mitigation requirements when removal of a heritage tree or tree of importance is approved.
- Require that a tree protection zone be established on a new development site that serves to protect heritage trees and trees of importance to prevent possible damage during construction activities.
- Require training for construction workers on best practices for avoiding damage and require monitoring by a qualified arborist during construction activities.
- Require City approval prior to the removal of street trees.
- Permit routine maintenance and pruning of heritage trees only when the survival of the tree will not be compromised.

Action NRC-1.3 Urban Forest Master Plan. Prepare an urban forest master plan for Hollister that includes quantified goals and tracking methods, including mapping the tree canopy.

Action NRC-1.4 List of Native Plant Species. Establish a list of native plant species for incorporation into the landscape design of proposed development projects.

7.2.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

GOAL NRC-2 Protect and preserve the tribal cultural resources in the Hollister Sphere of Influence.

Photo by Valera Key

Policies

Policy NRC-2.1 Tribal Cultural Resources. The City shall acknowledge the importance of tribal cultural resources by taking concrete steps to preserve areas that have identifiable and important tribal cultural resources.

Policy NRC-2.2 Tribal Consultation. Support the tribal consultation process, relationship building, and respect for tribal cultural resources. Consult with Native American representatives, including through early coordination, to identify locations of importance to Native Americans, including archaeological sites, sacred sites, traditional cultural properties, and other types of tribal cultural resources. Respect tribal concerns if a tribe has a religious prohibition against revealing information about specific practices or locations.

Policy NRC-2.3 Protection and Preservation of Archaeological Resources. Require project applicants to comply with state and federal standards to evaluate and mitigate impacts to tribal resources prior to project approval. Continue to require that project areas found to contain significant archaeological resources be examined by a qualified consulting archaeologist with recommendations for protection and preservation.

Policy NRC-2.4 Tribal Coordination During Project Construction. Require the developer of a proposed project that could impact a tribal cultural resource to contact an appropriate tribal representative to train construction workers on appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, requirements for confidentiality and culturally appropriate treatment, other applicable regulations and consequences of violating State laws and regulations prior to construction.

Policy NRC-2.5 **Preconstruction Investigations.** Require project applicants to prepare preconstruction investigations of potential tribal cultural resources and on-site mitigation for all developments prior to the issuance of building permits.

Photo by Bob Rowlands

7.2.3 Air Quality

GOAL NRC-3 Protect clean air resources.

Policies

Policy NRC-3.1 **State and Federal Standards for Air Quality.** Continue to comply with and strive to exceed state and federal standards for air quality.

Policy NRC-3.2 **Consistency with Air Quality Management Plan.** Review all development proposals for consistency with the current Air Quality Management Plan of the Monterey Bay Air Resources District.

Policy NRC-3.3 **Air Quality Consideration in Land Use Planning.** Promote land use compatibility for new development by using buffering techniques, such as landscaping, setbacks, and screening in areas where different land uses abut one another to help ensure excellent air quality and land use compatibility.

Policy NRC-3.4 **Air Quality Planning and Coordination.** Integrate air quality considerations with the land use and transportation processes by mitigating air quality impacts through land use design measures, such as encouraging project design that will foster walking and biking.

Policy NRC-3.5 **Circulation Projects to Reduce Impacts on Air Quality.** Promote circulation projects that reduce air pollution.

Policy NRC-3.6 **Technical Assessments.** Require project applicants to prepare technical assessments evaluating potential project construction and operation phase-related air quality impacts to the City of Hollister for review and approval prior to project approval. Such evaluations shall be prepared in conformance with Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) criteria and methodology in assessing air quality impacts. If air pollutants are found to have

the potential to exceed the MBARD-adopted thresholds of significance, ensure mitigation measures, such as those listed in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report, are incorporated to reduce air pollutant emissions during construction or operational activities.

Policy NRC-3.7 Air Quality Standards in Development Review. Require developers to implement strategies for air quality improvement through the development review process. Ensure that any proposed new sources of particulate matter use latest control technology (such as enclosures, paving unpaved areas, parking lot sweeping, and landscaping) and provide adequate buffer setbacks to protect existing or future sensitive receptors.

Policy NRC-3.8 Commercial and Industrial Projects Exceeding 10,000 Square Feet. Require new or expanded commercial and industrial projects exceeding 10,000 square feet of gross floor area, such as big-box stores, warehouses, distribution centers, and similar uses, to be zero-emissions operations, including the facilities themselves and the associated fleets. Require all necessary measures, such as the following, to achieve zero emissions:

- Provide adequate on-site parking for all anticipated truck traffic to prevent idling and off-site queuing.
- Provide electrified loading docks with receptacles allowing plug-in of refrigerated and other types of trailers that otherwise would receive power from the tractor unit.
- Use heavy-duty trucks that are model year 2014 or later.
- Use zero-emission or "clean fleet" for delivery vehicles.
- Use zero-emission forklifts, pallet trucks and jacks, stackers, and other yard equipment.
- Implement practices to control road dust, tire wear, brake dust, and other contaminants in paved areas.

Policy NRC-3.9 Acute Air Quality Pollution Impact. Require projects or businesses that create acute air quality pollution impacts to implement mitigation measures to protect the health of the community in the affected area.

Policy NRC-3.10 Idling of Diesel Engines. Prohibit idling of diesel engines citywide. Prohibit non-diesel truck, construction vehicle, and transit vehicle idling within 100 feet of sensitive receptors, such as homes, schools, playgrounds, sports fields, childcare centers, senior centers, and long-term health care facilities.

Policy NRC-3.11 Particulate Matter Pollution Reduction. Promote the reduction of particulate matter pollution from roads, parking lots, construction sites, agricultural lands, and other activities. This would include: (1) requiring the watering of exposed earth surfaces during excavation, grading, and construction activities; (2) requiring daily (or as needed based on actual circumstances) cleanup of mud and dust carried onto street surfaces by construction vehicles; and (3) requiring that appropriate measures be taken to reduce wind erosion during construction, such as watering of soil, replanting, and repaving.

Policy NRC-3.12 Air Quality Planning Coordination. Cooperate with the Monterey Bay Air Resources District and other agencies in their efforts to ensure compliance with existing air quality regulations.

Policy NRC-3.13 Air Quality Education Programs. Support and participate in air quality education programs.

Policy NRC-3.14 Construction Health Risk Assessment. Require project applicants of discretionary projects on sites greater than one acre, within 1,000 feet of sensitive land uses (e.g., residences, schools, day care facilities, and nursing homes, etc.), as measured from the property line of the project, that utilize off-road equipment of 50 horsepower or more, and that occur for more than 12 months of active construction (i.e., exclusive of interior renovations) to prepare a construction health risk assessment (HRA) in accordance with policies and procedures of the State Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment and Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD). If the construction HRA shows that the incremental cancer risk exceeds 10 in a million, the appropriate noncancer hazard index exceeds 1.0; or the thresholds as determined by the MBARD, require the project applicant to identify and demonstrate measures, such as those listed in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report, that can

reduce potential cancer and noncancer risks to an acceptable level.

Policy NRC-3.15 Operational Health Risk Assessment. Require project applicants of discretionary projects to prepare an operational health risk assessment (HRA) for industrial or warehousing land uses and commercial land uses that would generate substantial diesel truck travel (i.e., 100 diesel trucks or 40 or more trucks with diesel-powered transport refrigeration units per day based on the California Air Resources Board recommendations for siting new sensitive land uses) prior to project approval. The operational HRA shall be prepared in accordance with policies and procedures of the State Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment and the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD). If the operational HRA shows that the incremental cancer risk exceeds 10 in a million, the appropriate noncancer hazard index exceeds 1.0; or the thresholds as determined by the MBARD, the City shall require the project applicant to identify and demonstrate measures, such as those listed in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report, that can reduce potential cancer and noncancer risks to an acceptable level.

Policy NRC-3.16 Odor Management Plan. Require project applicants to prepare an Odor Management Plan prior to project approval for projects with the potential to emit nuisance odors beyond the property line (landfills, rendering plants, chemical plants, wastewater treatment plants, and refineries). The Odor Management Plan shall identify control technologies that will be used to reduce potential odors to acceptable levels, including appropriate enforcement mechanisms, to ensure compliance with Monterey Bay Air Resources District Rule 402.

ACTIONS

Action NRC-3.1 Idling Ordinance. Adopt an ordinance that matches or is more stringent than the State's maximum idling law, and coordinate with California Air Resources Board, Monterey Bay Air Resources District, and law enforcement to achieve compliance.

Photo by Jenny Knerr

7.2.4 Climate Change

GOAL NRC-4 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Hollister to meet or exceed State targets.

Policies

Policy NRC-4.1 **Carbon Neutral.** Encourage efforts that help Hollister become a net carbon-neutral community by 2045.

Policy NRC-4.2 **Greenhouse Gas Emission-Reduction Targets.** Maintain a greenhouse gas reduction trajectory that meets or exceeds the statewide greenhouse gas reduction targets of Executive Orders B-30-15 (40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030) and S-03-05 (80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050) to ensure the City is consistent with statewide efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy NRC-4.3 **Energy Use.** Reduce energy use through use of energy-efficient appliances, lighting, and materials in our homes, businesses, and City facilities and use education and incentives to promote and sustain energy-conserving design and practices.

Policy NRC-4.4 **Climate Action Plan Implementation in City Work Plans.** Include Climate Action Plan implementation needs, including funding sources and staff time, in City department work plans.

Policy NRC-4.5 **Infill and Mixed-Use Development.** Support the development of infill sites and compact mixed-use projects that reduce travel distances and promote alternative modes of transportation.

Policy NRC-4.6 **Low-Emission/No-Carbon Transportation.** Encourage the transition to low- or no-carbon transportation systems, which could include installation of electric vehicle charging stations at public and private facilities, expansion of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and conversion to zero-emission buses.

Policy NRC-4.7 **Municipal Fleet Alternative Fuel Vehicles.** Shift municipal vehicle fleet from gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles to zero-emission and low-carbon vehicles, to the extent possible.

Policy NRC-4.8 Carbon-Free Energy. Promote carbon-free energy sources in new and existing developments.

Policy NRC-4.9 Zero Waste Community. Reduce and ultimately eliminate single-use materials, like plastic cups, Styrofoam containers, and similar disposable items, from landfills, and support the reuse of materials and products, repair and sharing of items, and rely on sustainable materials to build homes and businesses.

ACTIONS

Action NRC-4.1 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Monitoring. Annually monitor and report on changes in community-wide emissions and progress toward greenhouse gas emission-reduction targets, and revise greenhouse gas reduction efforts as needed to progress toward net-carbon neutrality and other targets.

Action NRC-4.2 Building Standards Code Efficiency Amendments. Conduct a study to explore opportunities to amend the Hollister Building Standards Code to improve building energy efficiency, transition to carbon-free energy sources, increase renewable energy supplies, and promote greater electric vehicle adoption.

Action NRC-4.3 Zero-Waste Plan. Prepare a Zero-Waste Plan in partnership with the San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Regional Agency.

Action NRC-4.4 Community Energy-Efficiency Education Programs. Develop community education programs on energy efficiency and renewable energy, sustainable transportation options, waste reduction, and water conservation in partnership with regional agencies and community groups.


Photo by Kent Rossi

7.2.5 Water Quality and Water Conservation

GOAL NRC-5 Protect and improve water quality in and around Hollister.

Policies

Policy NRC-5.1 **Local, State, and Federal Standards for Water Quality.** Continue to comply with local, state, and federal standards for water quality.

Policy NRC-5.2 **Proper Disposal of Pollutants.** Continue to promote proper disposal of pollutants to the sanitary sewer or hazardous waste facilities rather than to the storm drainage system.

Policy NRC-5.3 **Water Quality at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.** Monitor the wastewater treatment plant to ensure that nitrate levels stay within legal limits.

Policy NRC-5.4 **Groundwater Quality.** Ensure groundwater quality is maintained at a satisfactory level.

Actions

Action NRC-5.1 **Well and Ditch Tail Water Tests.** Develop procedures requiring developers to conduct well and ditch tail water tests and to implement appropriate actions to protect public health and safety associated with the presence of herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals that have the potential to pollute groundwater and cause health risks.

Action NRC-5.2 **Pesticide and Fertilizer Management.** Encourage the appropriate reduction of pesticides and fertilizers to the maximum extent feasible on City property. Ensure that the application of pesticides on City property is accomplished in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations.

Action NRC-5.3 **Water Quality Source Control Program.** Develop guidelines for a water quality source control program that incorporates public education, planning, management, material use and disposal controls, spill prevention and cleanup, street sweeping, and sewer maintenance.

Action NRC-5.4 **Water Quality Education Programs.** Develop a public information and education program to enhance water quality. Such a program may include storm drain stenciling, presentations to schools and community groups, and watershed planning efforts.

Action NRC-5.5 **Water Pollution Prevention Program.** Develop an illicit discharge elimination program that will seek to eliminate illegal connections to the storm drain system and the illegal dumping of toxic materials into the storm drain system. Include requirements for contractors to comply with accepted stormwater pollution prevention planning practices for all projects subject to erosion potential, and continue to require the proper use, storage, and disposal of on-site materials.

7.2.6 Mineral Resources

GOAL NRC-6 Protect the current and future extraction of mineral resources in Hollister while minimizing impacts of this use on the public and the environment.

Photo by Kent Rossi

Policies

Policy NRC-6.1 **Mineral Resource Conservation.** Use land use controls and other appropriate measures to preserve regionally significant mineral resources in the Planning Area identified by the State Division of Mining and Geology.

Policy NRC-6.2 **Mineral Resource Impact Review.** Review impacts on mineral resources and other natural resources prior to the issuance of any building permit.

Policy NRC-6.3 **Mineral Resource Management.** Manage mineral resource extraction to ensure that this activity results in the fewest possible environmental impacts. Require preparation and assured implementation of a rehabilitation plan for mineral extraction sites as a condition of mining approval. The mineral resource extraction plan shall address the protection and restoration of biotic resources.

Policy NRC-6.4 Expansion of Mining Sites. New or expanded mining operations in the Hollister Planning Area shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- Demonstrate no significant adverse impacts from the mining operations on adjoining areas and uses, including, but not limited to, those associated with noise, dust, and vibration.
- Demonstrate no substantial increase in hazards to neighboring uses, water quality, air quality, agricultural resources, or biological resources.
- Demonstrate that the proposed plan complies with existing applicable County and State waste management standards.
- Incorporate sufficient buffering between mining operations and adjacent non-mining uses to minimize noise.
- Incorporate landscaping buffers and other measures to minimize visual impacts to the extent possible.

Policy NRC-6.5 Land Use Compatibility. Restrict permitted uses on lands containing important mineral resources to those compatible with mineral extraction, except in cases where such uses offer public benefits that outweigh those of resource extraction.

Policy NRC-6.6 Reclamation of Mining Sites. Reclaim former mining sites to a condition that is readily adaptable for alternative land uses, consistent with the Land Use Map and other applicable policies, in accordance with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA).

Policy NRC-6.7 Union Road Mineral Resources. Preserve aggregate mineral resources in the Union Road Special Planning Area that are of known value to the region.