

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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April 27, 2015

Agenda Item 9(d) SMMC 5/22/17

Mr. Kim K. Szalay
County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning
Special Projects Section
320 West Temple Street, Room 1362
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Notice of Preparation Comments
Northlake Specific Plan - Phase One Implementation
Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TR073336**

Dear Mr. Szalay:

The subject property in the Santa Clara River watershed contains regionally significant viewshed (including night skies) from Interstate 5 and comprises regionally significant inter-mountain range habitat linkage potential between the Angeles and Los Padres National forests. The ecological integration of these two national forests has a direct affect on the long-term ecological viability of all the habitat located in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy’s jurisdiction. The project’s proposed adverse impacts to the Santa Clara River watershed will also have a direct effect on the ecological vitality of numerous sections of the Santa Clara River within the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor.

Interstate 5 - Inter-mountain Range Habitat Linkage Onsite

The focus on inter-mountain range habitat linkages across Interstate 5 (I5) has sharpened greatly since the Northlake Specific Plan was adopted in 1992. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) must address the regional ecological value of this cross-freeway wildlife habitat connection. The South Coast Wildlands project identifies this linkage in its landmark “*Missing Linkages*” report as the Western and Eastern Sierra Madre Mountains Linkage. The linkage is further studied in the follow-up report “*South Coast Missing Linkages Project - A Linkage Design for the Sierra Madre - Castaic Connection*,” completed in March 2005.

In any case the ecological interface between the Los Padres and Angeles National Forest

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ecosystems is of statewide importance. The quality and quantity of connectivity across I5 must be maximized to guarantee maintenance of existing ecological conditions both within these two national forests and within the hundreds of thousands of other public and privately owned natural lands that depend on them for wildlife population stability. The proposed growth between the subject project area and Highway 138, area where the first phase of the Tejon Ranch project has been proposed, leaves no existing, or potential, crossing safe unless all the component land is publically owned. In addition, those public agencies must have put in place permanent safeguards to insure that linkage function cannot diminish on their lands. Those public agencies include Caltrans and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works because they control the transportation corridor rights-of-ways and their ubiquitous fencing.

The DEIR may show that better cross-I5 habitat linkages exist north of the project site between Violin Summit and Highway 138. However, regardless of the presence of such linkages, two factors make potential cross-I5 habitat linkages just east of the proposed project area regionally important. Habitat linkage redundancy and spatial separation is critical to maintain species diversity. In addition, linkage redundancy is critical insurance to compensation for adverse impacts from future transportation and other infrastructure projects through the I5 corridor.

The DEIR must provide a thorough examination of the opportunities and constraints for wildlife movement across I5 between the southern boundary of the project area and Violin Summit. Property ownership and rights-of-way analyses are critical to such a study.

Two underpasses beneath the southbound lanes of I5 provide excellent opportunity for wildlife to cross into the multi-hundred acre habitat area between the two south and north bound lane crossovers. One such underpass is located approximately parallel to the intersection of the northern boundary of Phase One and Old Ridge Route. The other undercrossing is located more northward, approximately in the center of the southwest quarter of Section 3. That is essentially the north-south mid-point of Phase Two. There may be additional undercrossings not uncovered by our analysis. These underpasses probably represent the southernmost, large animal routes under I5 until Castaic Creek crosses under by Highway 126. We do not know if undercrossings, or good sites for potential undercrossings, exist beneath the northbound lanes. The DEIR must examine the opportunities for crossing under the northbound lanes.

The DEIR must also analyze how the proposed project would extend the urban and suburban land use miles up I5 into some of the most ecologically valuable core habitat in

southern California. The DEIR should address how the ecological integrity of the proposed protected onsite natural open space would be maintained and protected by a permanently funded management entity. Natural land set aside next to dense residential subdivisions requires maintenance funding to ensure long-term biological mitigation values.

Incompatibility of the Project with the Site

Few professional planners, and even fewer biologists, would attest to the fact that either the original project, or the proposed revisions to Phase I, represent an acceptable project for the site. Without the early 1990s Program FEIR and Development Agreement approval in the books, all versions of this project would be DOA upon submission to the Planning Department. The subsequent removal of the golf course then makes a poor project much poorer by creating an additional unavoidable significant adverse ecological impact, specifically to wildlife movement. The applicants attempt to paint a rosy picture by saying that the project (at least Phase I) will be laced with various recreational amenities on manufactured pads and slopes. Those dispersed green spaces on manufactured slopes internal to the development obviously do not mitigate for regional wildlife movement. Pretty much the rest of the project remains the same with a mix of commercial and residential uses. There is no public policy justification to approve an amended project that will result in an otherwise avoidable significant adverse impact to regional wildlife movement.

Project Phases One and Two must be Included in a Single EIR

All cumulative impacts and wildlife habitat linkage analyses of the subject area must include all of the subject Northlake project. For example, a Phase One project footprint that provides marginal wildlife access to existing 15 undercrossings, could have that access eliminated by multiple Phase Two alternative project footprints. For this reason, and given the 23-year gap since the Specific Plan EIR, adequate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review of the subject project must lump Phases One and Two as a single project in the DEIR. If that action is not taken by the County, the DEIR must include a comprehensive answer why the two phases do not have to be considered in a single DEIR.

The proposed Phase One project includes a minimum of three arterial streets that come to the border of Phase Two. The future contemplated development of Phase Two mandates analysis of its potential impacts with Phase One. Our position is that project piecemealing will occur under all circumstances unless a DEIR is prepared for all potential development on the property.

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In 1992, the golf course approved in the Program Specific Plan EIR was the critical project feature that allowed wildlife to move through the project between large open space areas to the north and Castaic Creek to the south. The current project omits the golf course in exchange for scattered pocket recreation sites. Essentially, under the current proposal a decision maker can only safely assume that regional wildlife movement would be as adversely impacted in Phase II as in Phase I because the golf course has been omitted from the Phase I. Therefore, an analysis of regional wildlife movement that does not address both Phases I and II together cannot provide decision makers with complete information regarding potential project impacts.

The DEIR analysis must address the influence of the approved Development Agreement on the issue of requiring a combined Phase One and Two EIR. When did, or does, the Development Agreement expire? How would proposed project changes affect the Development Agreement? More specifically, the significant removal of the golf course must require changes to the Development Agreement. If those changes exist they should be disclosed in the DEIR.

What is the effect of proposed offsite grading on prior Specific Plan and CEQA approval?

It is not clear if the 1992 Specific Plan and EIR encompassed the approximately 284 acres of off-site grading on adjacent private land and within the Castaic Lake State Recreation Area. If the 1992 EIR did not include any offsite grading, then the project description has changed substantially. If the County disagrees with this conclusion, the DEIR must include a definitive, comprehensive answer why the project description has not changed substantially.

Please address any questions and future correspondence to the attention of Paul Edelman, Deputy Director of Natural Resources and Planning, at the above address and by phone at (310) 589-3200 ext. 128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Parks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LINDA PARKS
Chairperson



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

Agenda Item 9(d) SMMC 5/22/17

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**NOTICE OF HEARING EXAMINER PUBLIC HEARING
NOTICE OF COMPLETION AND AVAILABILITY
DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR
NORTHLAKE SPECIFIC PLAN PROJECT
COUNTY PROJECT NO. R2015-00408-(5)
VESTING TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. TR073336
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 201500019
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW 201500030
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE NO. 2015031080**

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, acting in the capacity of "Lead Agency" under the County Environmental Guidelines, Chapter III, Section 304, has filed this "Notice of Completion and Availability" of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the NorthLake Specific Plan Project (the Project). This document has been prepared in accordance with, and pursuant to, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as amended, Public Resources Code, Section 21000 *et seq.*; and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (State CEQA Guidelines), California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 15000 *et seq.* (including Section 15160).

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

The public review period for the DEIR will be from May 2, 2017 through June 15, 2017 (45 days). All comments received by the close of the public review period will be considered in the Project's Final EIR.

SITE LOCATION

The Project Site is located in unincorporated Los Angeles County and the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area (Valley Planning Area). The Project Site is specifically located east of I-5, west of Castaic Lake, and north of the community of Castaic, California. The Project Site is comprised of 1,330 acres, including 720 acres within proposed Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 73336 (VTTM 73336) and 610 acres to be developed at a future time. The Project also includes External Map Improvements that are located outside of VTTM 73336, but which are necessary to support full Project implementation. These External Map Improvements include construction of NorthLake Parkway, a connection of Grasshopper Creek Park, a debris basin, trail connections, a water tank pad, manufactured slopes, and natural open space. The Project Site and the alternatives considered in the DEIR are not located on a site that is included on any of the lists compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. (See DEIR Section 7.0, Other CEQA Topics.)

PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed Project includes development of Phase 1 of the NorthLake Specific Plan to be implemented via Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 73336 (VTTM 73336), which includes approximately 720 acres of the southern portion of the Specific Plan area and the remaining property for Phase 2 to be developed at a future time. The proposed Project would involve development of up to 3,150 residential units, 9.2 acres of commercial uses, 13.9 acres of industrial uses, 791.6 acres of parks and open space, a 23-acre school site, and a 1.4-acre pad for a future fire station. Of the total development, 1,974 dwelling units, (588 single-family units, 1,041 multi-family units, and 345 senior multi-family units), 13.9 acres of light industrial uses, 9.2 acres of commercial development, 407.3 acres of open space and parks, 6.7 acres utilities, 84.3 acres of roadways, and a 1.4 acre-fire station pad are proposed within the proposed VTTM 073336. As part of the project, External Map Improvements, including

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connection to existing utilities and relocation of existing utility lines, drainage facilities, and other infrastructure would occur outside of area specified as the proposed Project site.

The Project would require approval of the following entitlements: (1) Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 073336 to subdivide 720 acres into a total of 384 lots and (2) Conditional Use Permit No. 201500019 to authorize NorthLake Specific Plan site plan review, grading in excess of 100,000 cubic yards, and construction of water tanks and water supply infrastructure. The County will also require additional ministerial actions, such as building plan review, grading permits, and building permits prior to actual grading and construction of the proposed improvements.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The following is a summary of the impacts associated with the Project determined in the DEIR to be significant and unavoidable after implementation of Project design features and mitigation measures: A summary of the significant and unavoidable impacts of the project is included below.

- **Operational Air Quality Impacts.** Long-term emissions would remain significant and unavoidable for CO, VOC, NO_x, PM10, and PM2.5 on a regional level, after implementation of mitigation measures.
- **Construction Air Quality Impacts.** Construction NO_x emissions, both regional and local, would be significant and unavoidable with implementation of mitigation measures.
- **Cumulative Air Quality Impacts.** The project's contribution toward long-term cumulative impacts to regional O₃, NO₂, PM10, and PM2.5 concentrations would be cumulatively significant and unavoidable.
- **Construction Noise Impacts.** There would be significant and unavoidable vibration and noise impacts from blasting.
- **Operational Noise Impacts.** Off-site residential uses and the NorthLake Elementary School would experience a significant and unavoidable impact related to noise from Project-generated traffic on Ridge Route Road north of Castaic Lake Road and off-site residential uses would experience a significant and unavoidable cumulative impact related to noise from Project-generated traffic on Ridge Route Road north of Lake Hughes Road.
- **Cumulative Noise Impacts.** The project's contribution toward long-term cumulative off-site residential uses would experience a significant and unavoidable cumulative impact related to noise from Project-generated traffic on Ridge Route Road north of Castaic Lake Road and Ridge Route Road north of Lake Hughes Road.
- **Project and Cumulative Traffic Impacts:** The project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts at the following intersections: The Old Road and I-5 Southbound Ramps during the Horizon Year 2028; I-5 Northbound Ramps and Lake Hughes Road during the Horizon Year 2028; I-5 Southbound On-Ramp and Parker Road during the Existing Plus Project and Horizon Year 2028; I-5 Northbound Off-Ramp and Ridge Route Road during the Existing Plus Project and Horizon Year 2028, and Ridge Route Road at Lake Hughes during the Existing Plus Project and Horizon Year 2028.

HEARING EXAMINER HEARING

A public hearing on the DEIR has been scheduled before the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning Hearing Examiner on May 24, 2017, starting at 6:00 p.m. and ending after the last testifier or 9:00 p.m., whichever comes first, at NorthLake Hills Elementary School, 32545 Ridge Route Road, Castaic, CA 91384.

REVIEWING LOCATIONS

To ensure public access to the DEIR, copies of the document are available for review at the following County libraries:

- Castaic Library, 27971 Sloan Canyon Road, Castaic
- Stevenson Ranch Library, 25950 The Old Road, Stevenson Ranch
- San Fernando Library, 217 North Maclay Avenue, San Fernando

A copy of the DEIR will also be available for public review Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at:

County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning
Hall of Records, 13th Floor, Room 1348
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

An electronic version of the DEIR is also available on the Department's website by typing "Northlake" or "R2015-00408" into the case archive search box at this web address: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/case>.

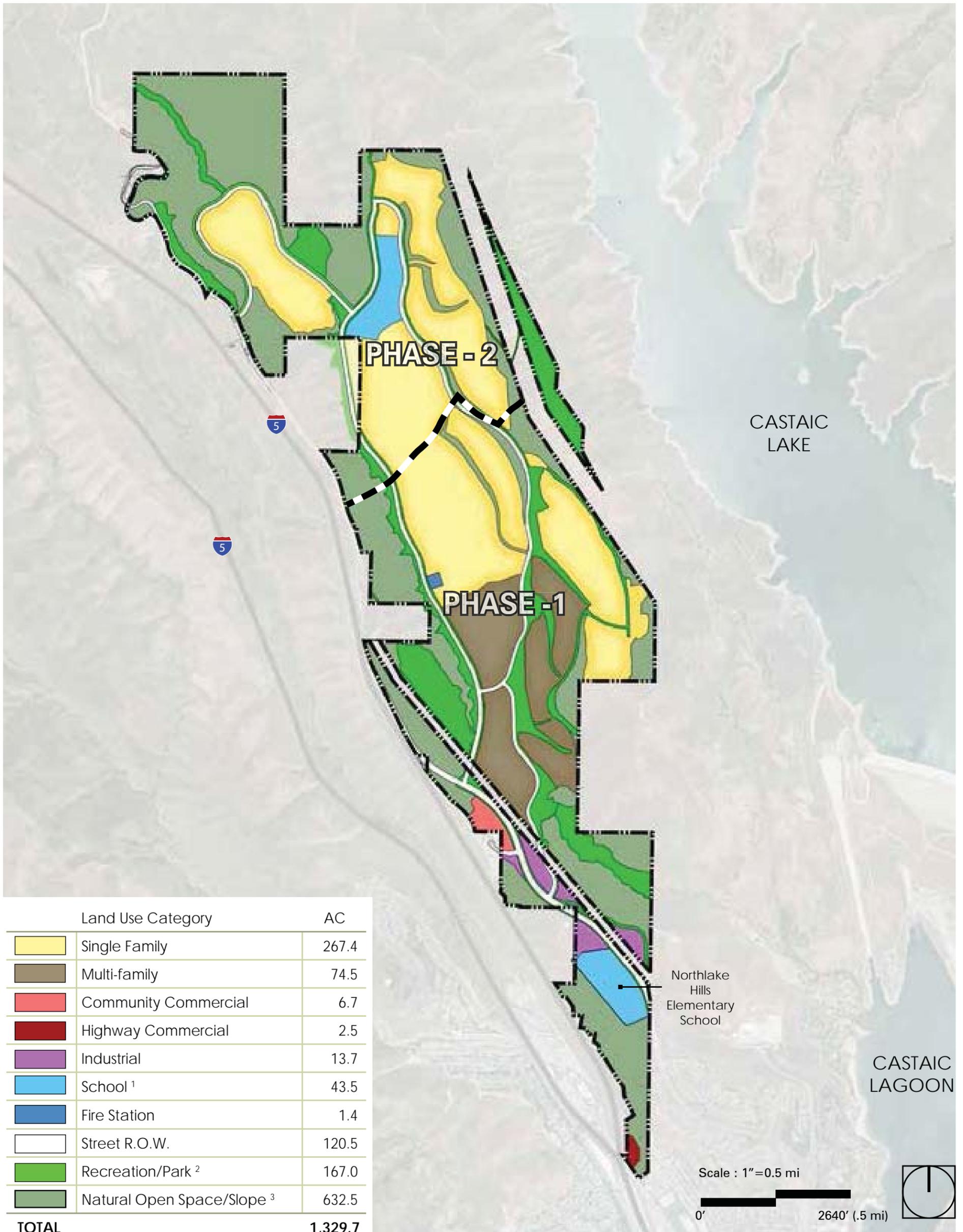
You may submit written comments on the DEIR to Mr. Jodie Sackett of the Department of Regional Planning at the above mailing address. You may also fax your written comments to (213) 626-0434, or e-mail them to jsackett@planning.lacounty.gov. Should you have any questions, please call (213) 974-6443.

Signature of Lead Agency Representative



Date

4/27/17



Land Use Category	AC
Single Family	267.4
Multi-family	74.5
Community Commercial	6.7
Highway Commercial	2.5
Industrial	13.7
School ¹	43.5
Fire Station	1.4
Street R.O.W.	120.5
Recreation/Park ²	167.0
Natural Open Space/Slope ³	632.5
TOTAL	1,329.7

Northlake Hills Elementary School

CASTAIC LAGOON

Scale : 1"=0.5 mi
 0' 2640' (.5 mi)

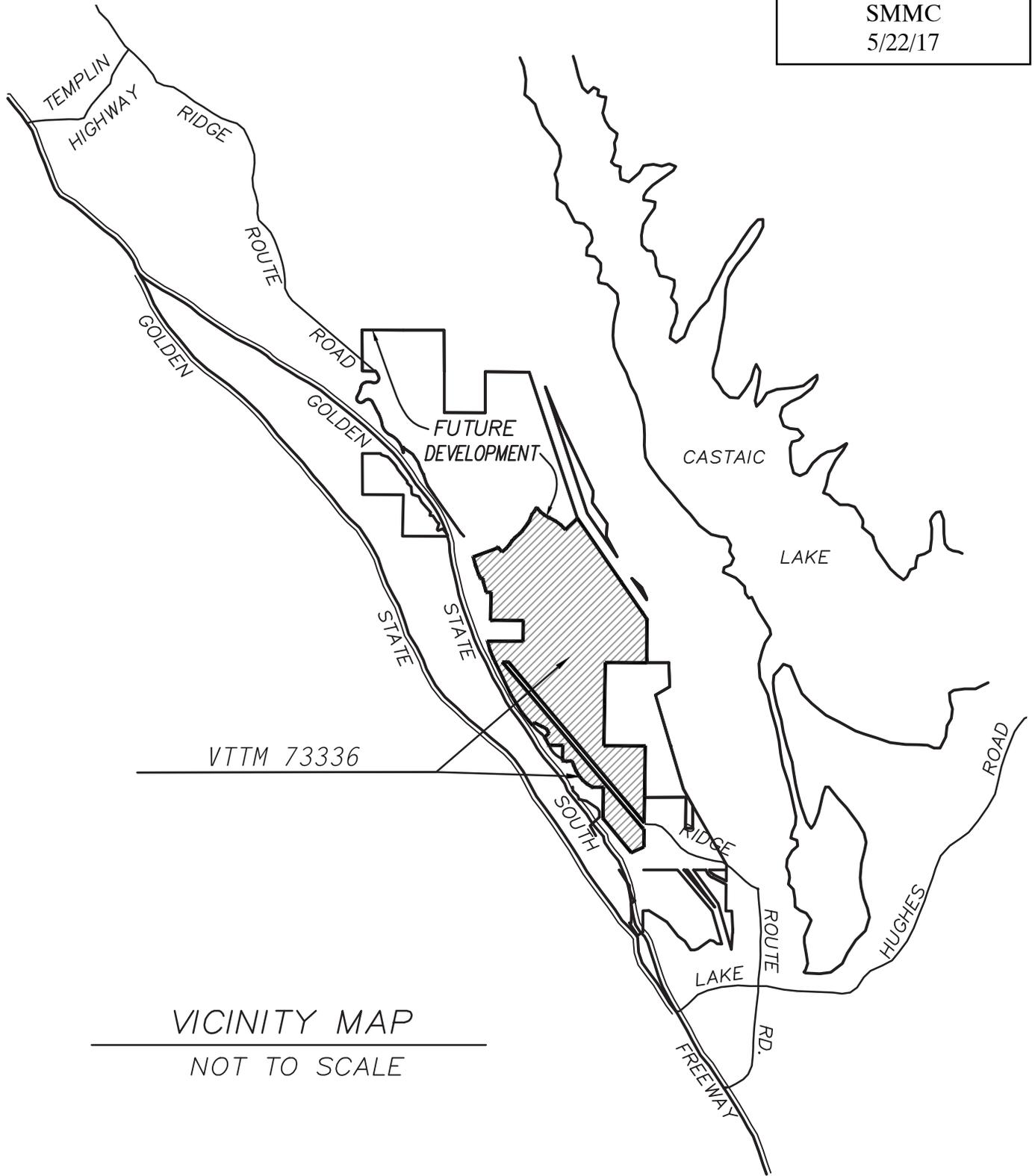
Source: PlaceWorks 2017

Proposed Land Use Plan

Exhibit 4-1

NorthLake Specific Plan Project





VICINITY MAP
NOT TO SCALE

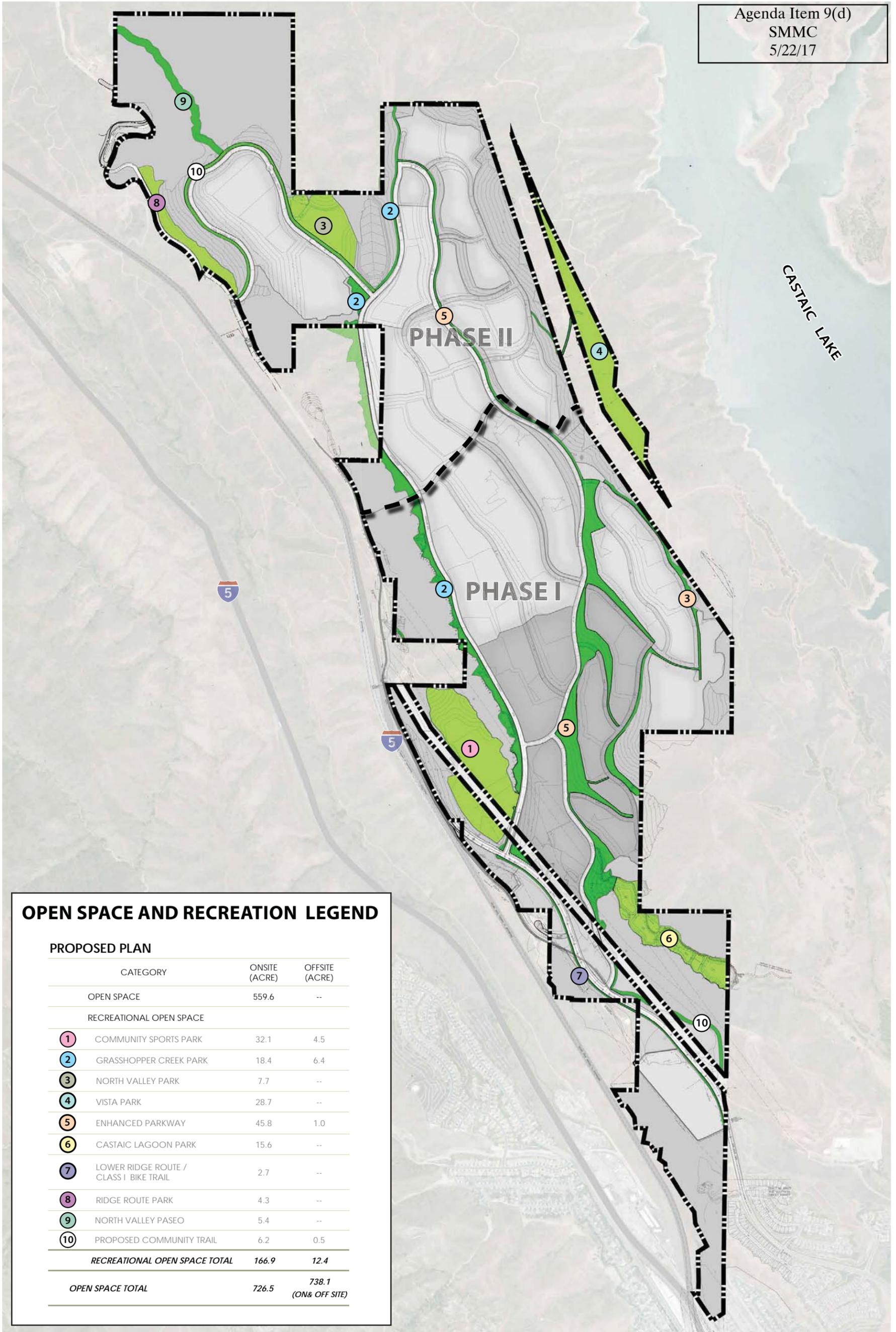
Source: Sikand 2015

Phase I Site Plan - VTTM 73336

Exhibit 4-3

NorthLake Specific Plan Project





OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION LEGEND

PROPOSED PLAN

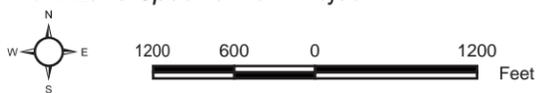
CATEGORY	ONSITE (ACRE)	OFFSITE (ACRE)
OPEN SPACE	559.6	--
RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE		
① COMMUNITY SPORTS PARK	32.1	4.5
② GRASSHOPPER CREEK PARK	18.4	6.4
③ NORTH VALLEY PARK	7.7	--
④ VISTA PARK	28.7	--
⑤ ENHANCED PARKWAY	45.8	1.0
⑥ CASTAIC LAGOON PARK	15.6	--
⑦ LOWER RIDGE ROUTE / CLASS I BIKE TRAIL	2.7	--
⑧ RIDGE ROUTE PARK	4.3	--
⑨ NORTH VALLEY PASEO	5.4	--
⑩ PROPOSED COMMUNITY TRAIL	6.2	0.5
RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE TOTAL	166.9	12.4
OPEN SPACE TOTAL	726.5	738.1 (ON& OFF SITE)

Source: PlaceWorks 2015

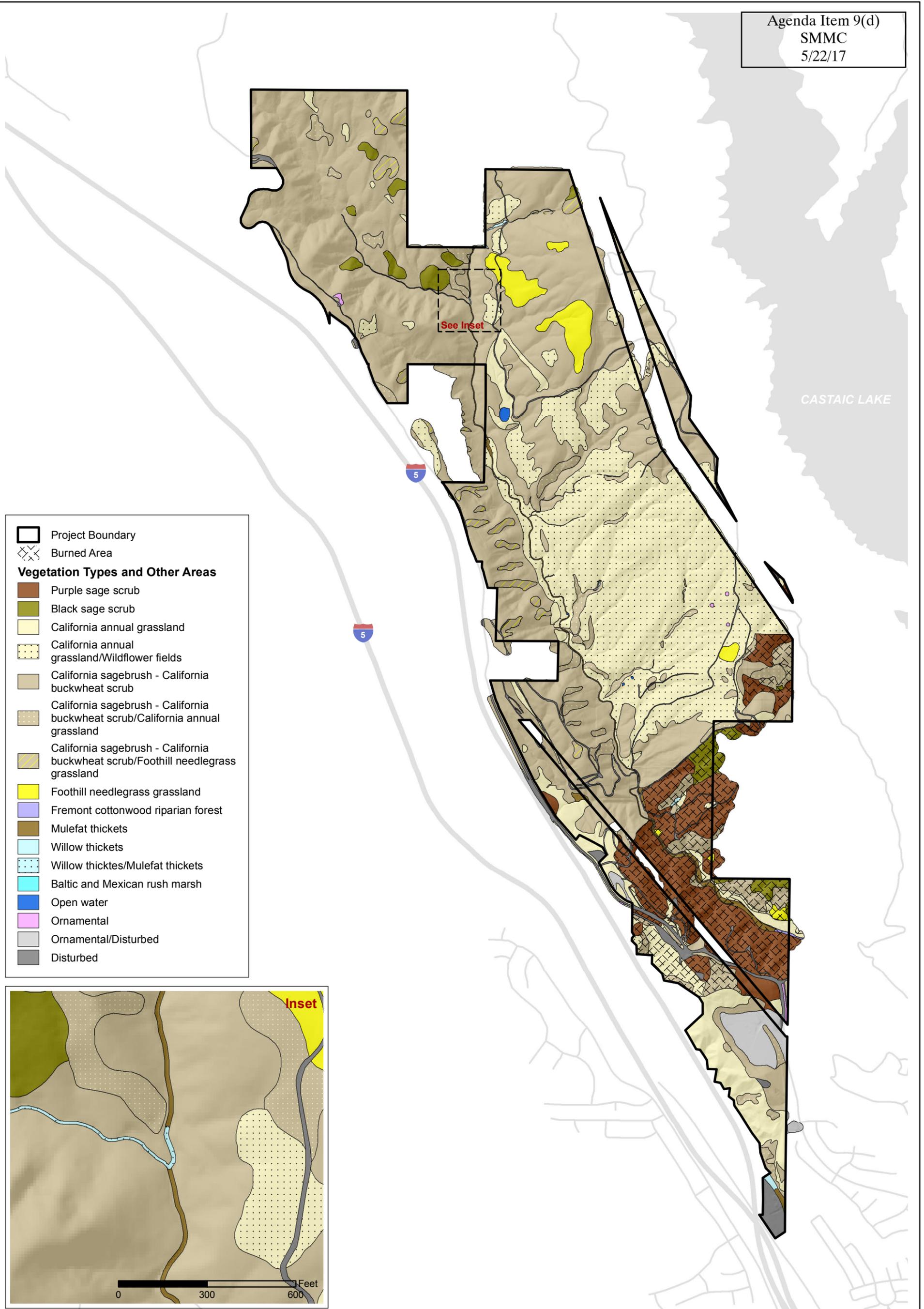
Parks and Recreation Plan

Exhibit 4-5

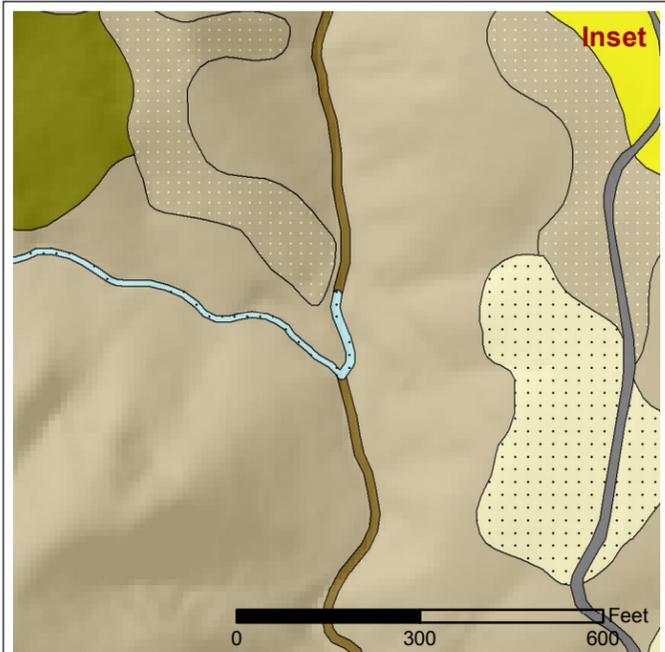
NorthLake Specific Plan Project



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- Project Boundary
- Burned Area
- Vegetation Types and Other Areas**
- Purple sage scrub
- Black sage scrub
- California annual grassland
- California annual grassland/Wildflower fields
- California sagebrush - California buckwheat scrub
- California sagebrush - California buckwheat scrub/California annual grassland
- California sagebrush - California buckwheat scrub/Foothill needlegrass grassland
- Foothill needlegrass grassland
- Fremont cottonwood riparian forest
- Mulefat thickets
- Willow thickets
- Willow thickets/Mulefat thickets
- Baltic and Mexican rush marsh
- Open water
- Ornamental
- Ornamental/Disturbed
- Disturbed



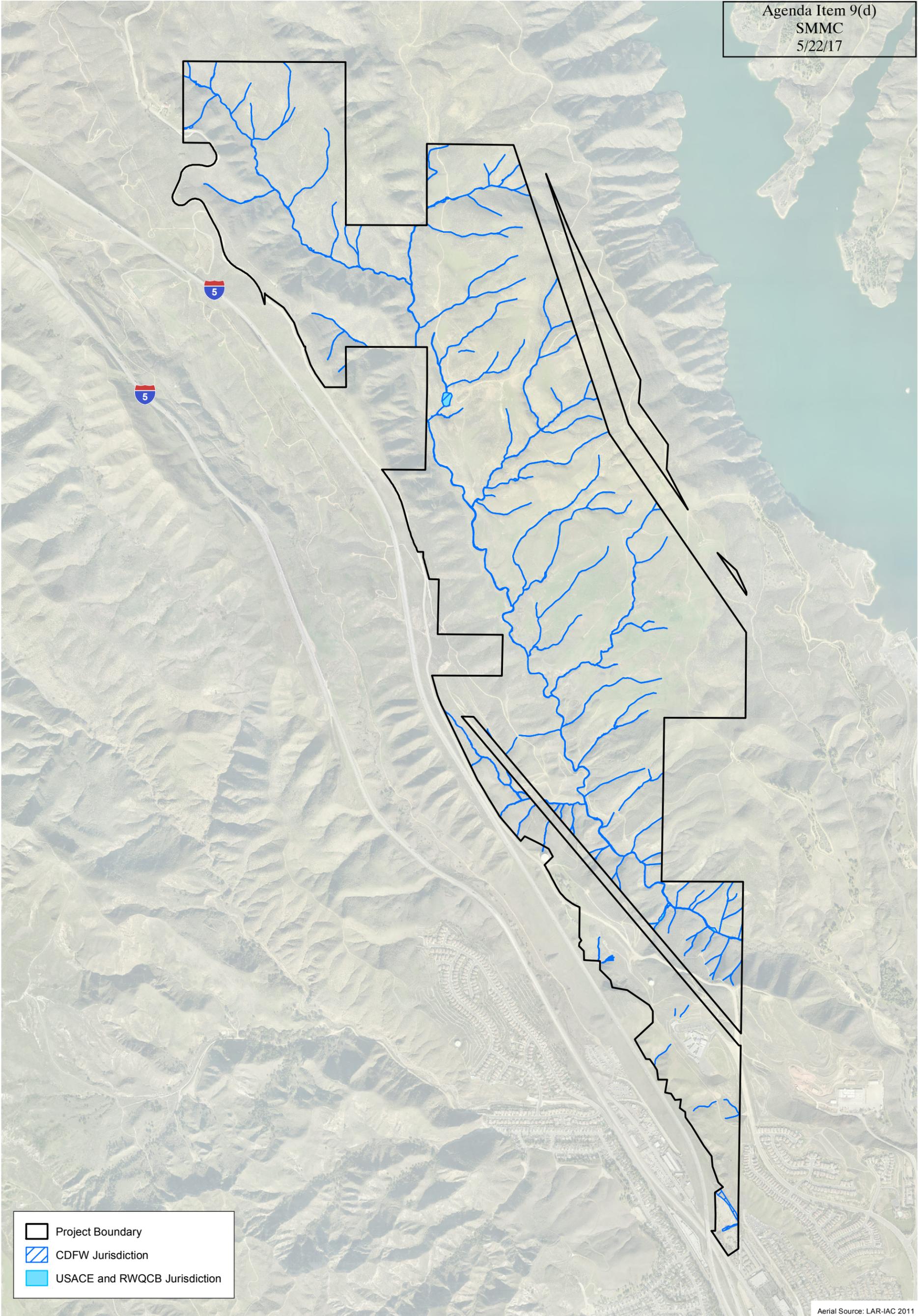
Vegetation Types and Other Areas

NorthLake Specific Plan SEIR



Exhibit 5.2-1





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Legend:

- Project Boundary
- CDFW Jurisdiction
- USACE and RWQCB Jurisdiction

Aerial Source: LAR-IAC 2011

Jurisdictional Features

NorthLake Specific Plan SEIR

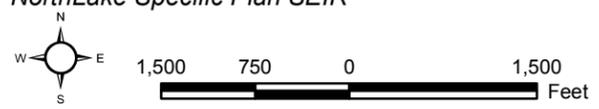
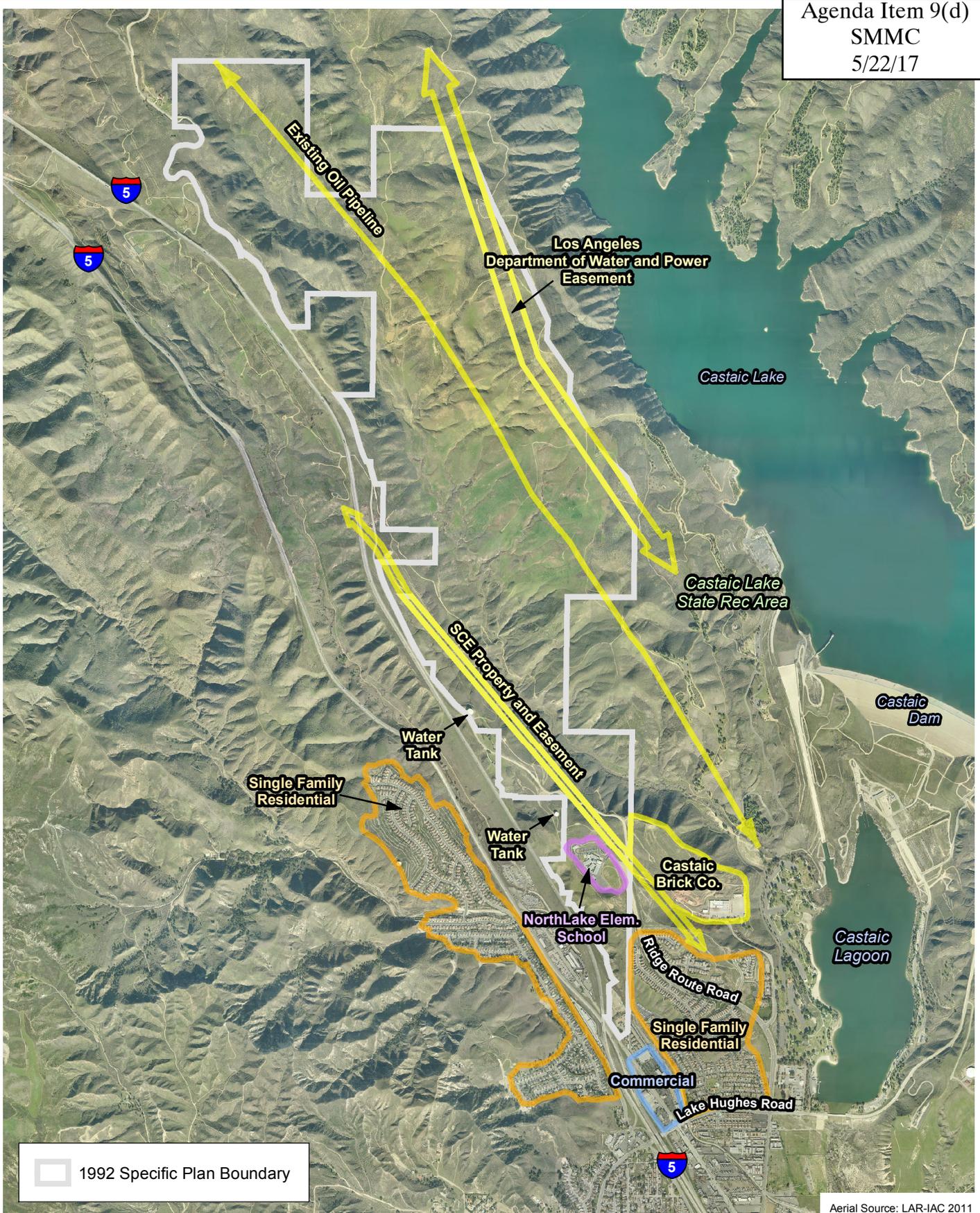


Exhibit 5.2-3



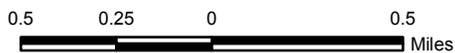


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Surrounding Area Orientation

NorthLake Specific Plan SEIR

Exhibit 3-3



Bonterra
PSOMAS