

# **LAS VARAS RANCH PROJECT**

05TPM-00000-00002, 05LLA-00000-00005, 05LLA-00000-00006,  
07CUP-00000-00057, 07RZN-00000-00006, 07RZN-00000-  
00005, 11COC-00000-00001, 11CDP-00000-00078

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

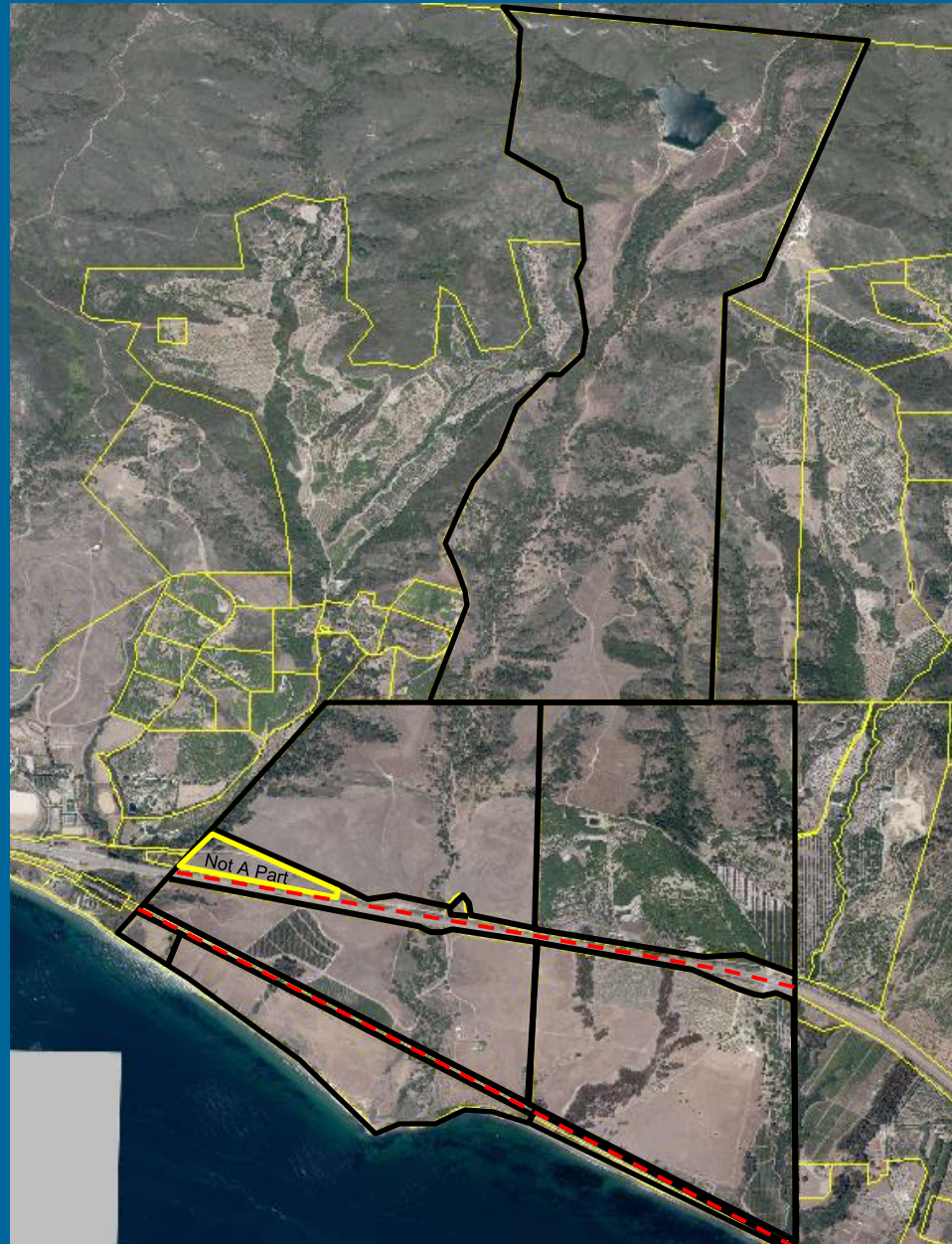
**February 17, 2015**

# Purpose of Hearing

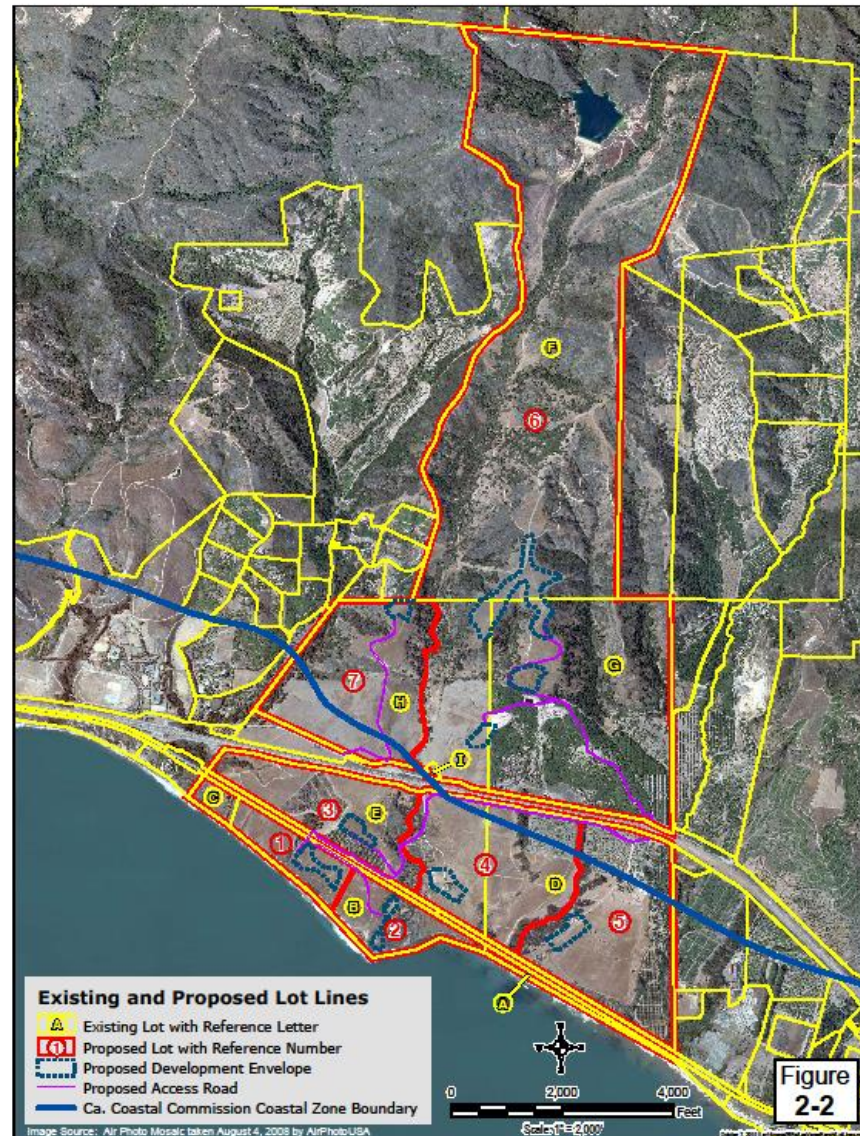
- Determine whether the EIR is adequate or whether additional environmental review is required
- If EIR is adequate, refer the project to the PC for full recommendation on the project
- If EIR is not adequate, direct staff to revise the EIR and return to the PC for full recommendation on the project



# Existing Ranch

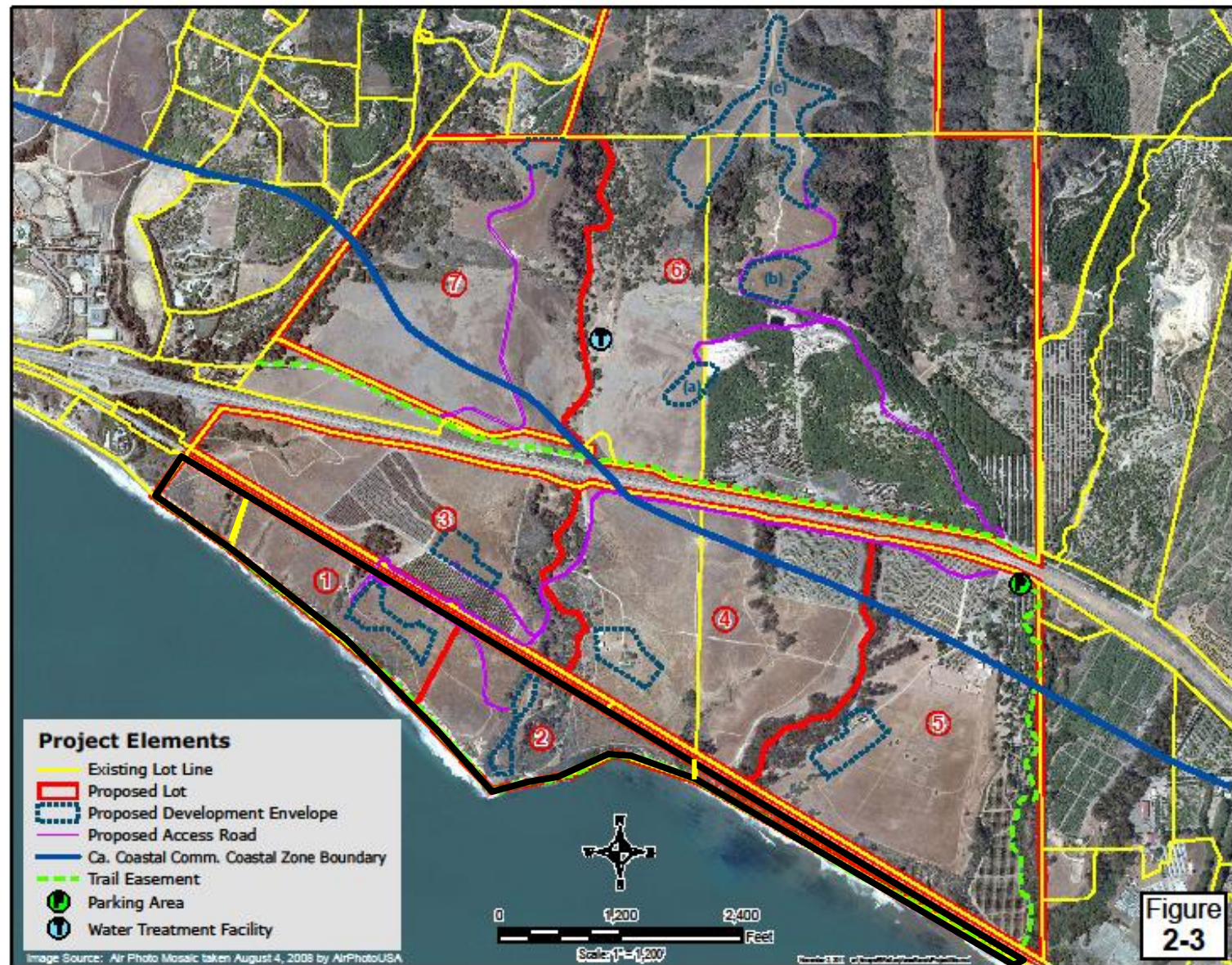


# Project Site Plan



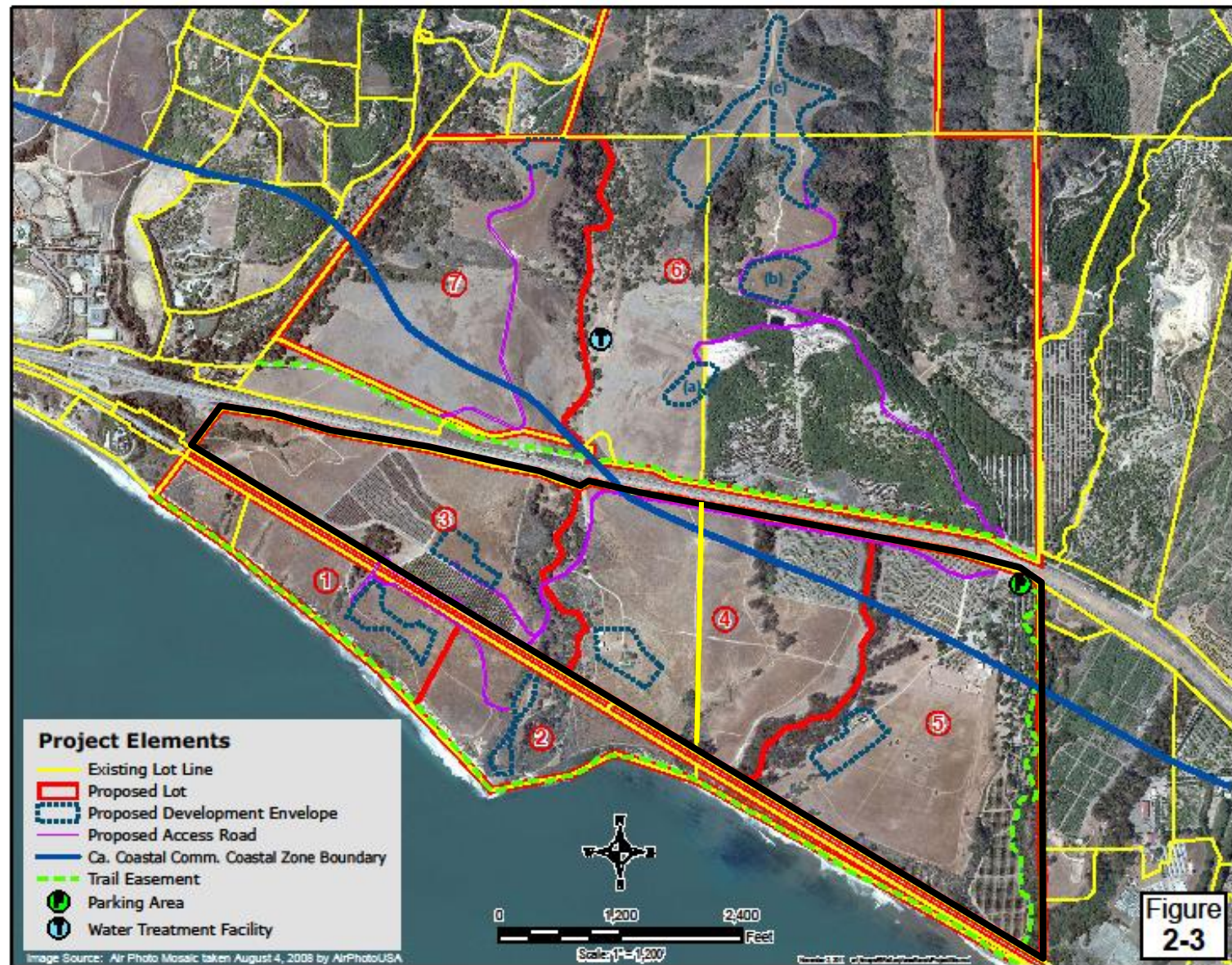


# SITE PLAN



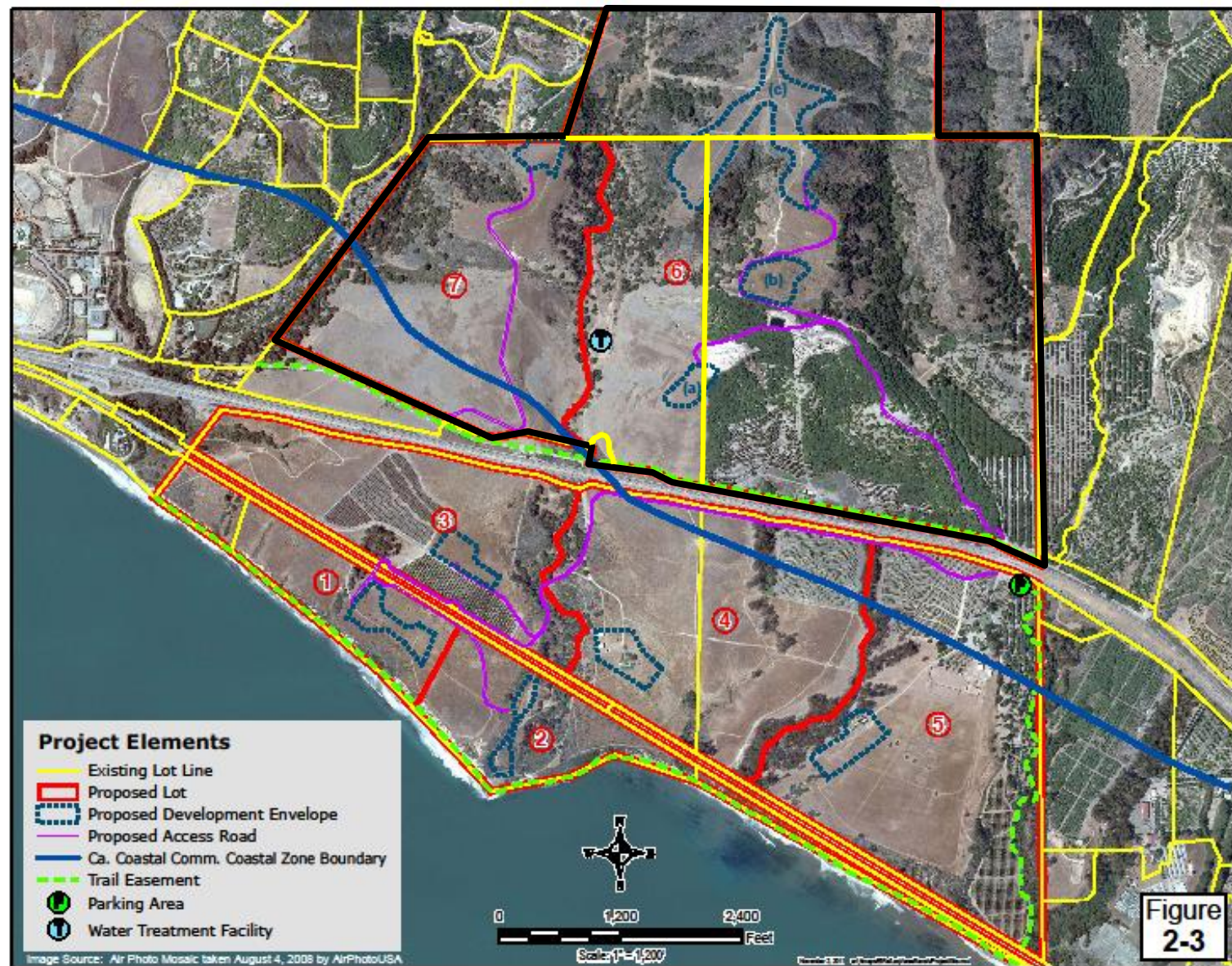


# SITE PLAN



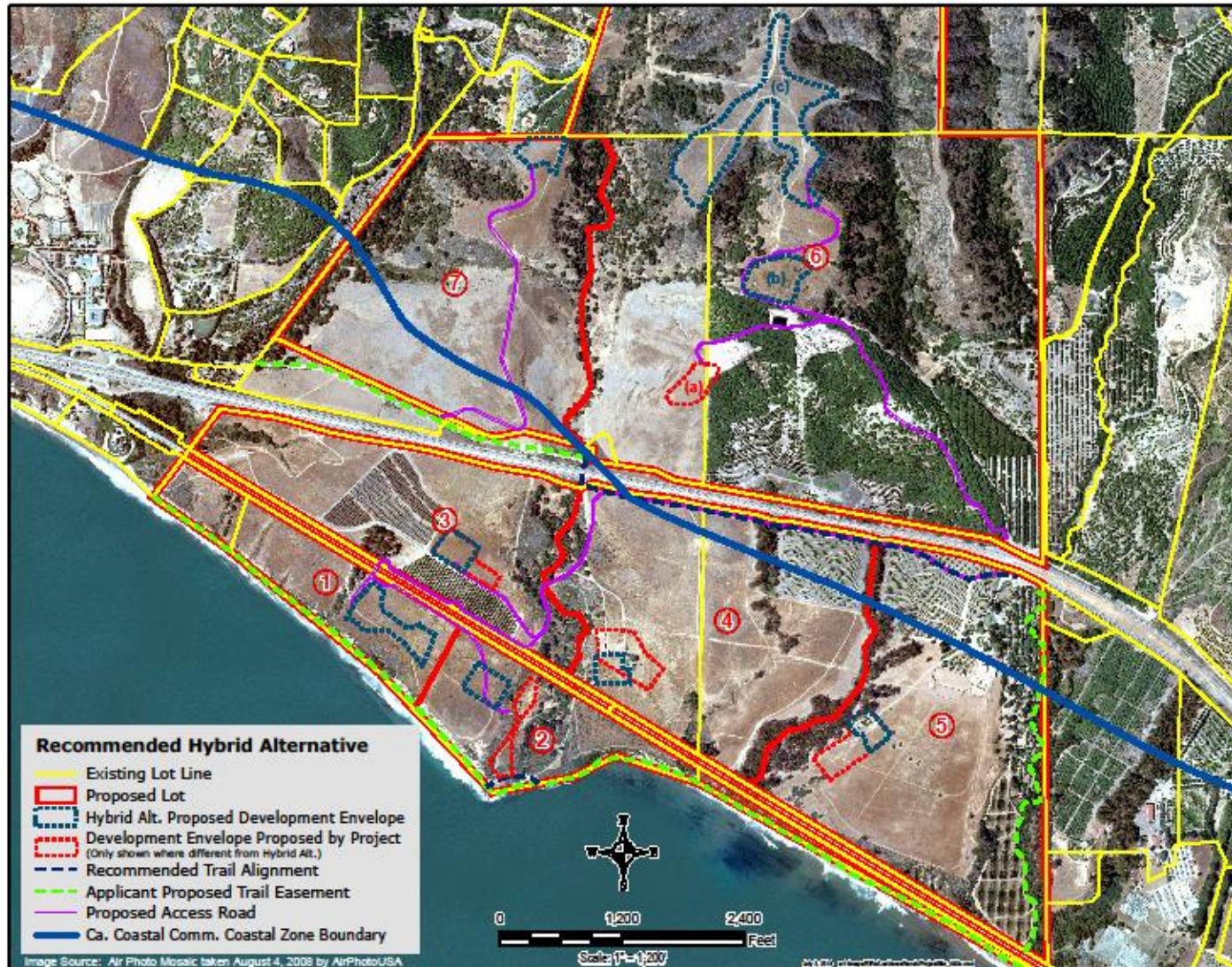


# SITE PLAN





# Recommended Hybrid Alternative





# Review History

- Project presented to PC in 2012 for consideration
- PC requested that Board determine whether trail exaction is warranted
- Board requested additional environmental review, including analysis of trail alternatives
- EIR revised and project returned to PC in 2014
- PC concluded that EIR is inadequate and recommended that Board require revisions to EIR



# EIR Issue Areas

## Aesthetics/Visual Resources

- PC Comments
  - Mitigation measures inadequate; don't address impacts outside of development envelopes
  - No analysis of proposed beach cabana on Lot 2
  - No analysis of visual impacts in the event that orchards are removed



# EIR Issue Areas

## Aesthetics/Visual Resources

- Staff Response
  - Agricultural development outside of envelopes is beyond scope of EIR
  - Such development would require CDHs
  - EIR analyzed development in same location as beach cabana; could be addressed in EIR Revision Letter
    - Applicant has withdrawn request for beach cabana
  - Removal of orchards not reasonably foreseeable



# EIR Issue Areas

## Agricultural Resources

- PC Comments
  - Impacts to agriculture should be Class I, not Class II
    - Potential for conversion and fragmentation of ag land and conflicts with residential use
    - Lack of control over potential conversion to non-commercial agriculture
    - Lack of enforceability of the mitigation measures/project conditions
  - Project inconsistent with ag protection policies, including CLUP 8-4 and Coastal Act Policy 30241

# EIR Issue Areas

## Agricultural Resources

- Staff Response
  - EIR concludes that residential development within each envelope would not significantly impact ag operation or impair long-term viability
  - Vast majority of ranch remains available for ag
  - No orchards removed to accommodate future development
  - Project includes built-in protections for ag operation that serve to perpetuate continued ag use
  - Speculative to presume that commercial ag would be replaced with hobby farms



# EIR Issue Areas

## Agricultural Resources

- Staff Response
  - Project creates no greater likelihood of such conversion than development in current parcel configuration
  - CC&R provisions are incorporated as conditions of approval and are enforceable for life of project
  - Future subdivisions are not reasonably foreseeable and would be subject to independent discretionary review
  - Project does not increase number of developable lots
  - Project is consistent with ag protection policies

# EIR Issue Areas

## Biological Resources

- PC Comments
  - EIR fails to adequately analyze impacts of development and activities outside of development envelopes
    - Impacts on birds of prey and special status wildlife



# EIR Issue Areas

## Biological Resources

- Staff Response
  - EIR evaluated impacts of future development on biological resources; drove changes to envelopes to avoid impacts
  - Mitigation measures identified, including pre-construction surveys
  - Adopted CEQA thresholds specify that project needs to *substantially* affect wildlife and habitat for impacts to be significant
  - Impacts from increase in human-related disturbance not substantial
  - Future development outside of envelopes would be subject to independent review

# EIR Issue Areas

## Cultural Resources

- PC Comments
  - No analysis of impacts to Rural Historic Landscape from development outside of envelopes
  - Ag structures outside of envelopes should be subject to same mitigation as applied to residential development



# EIR Issue Areas

## Cultural Resources

- Staff Response
  - Ag development outside of envelopes is not reasonably foreseeable
  - Such development would be subject to subsequent discretionary review, including CEQA
  - Appropriate mitigation measures would be applied to protect Rural Historic Landscape
  - Beyond the scope of the current project

# EIR Issue Areas

## Land Use/Recreation

- PC Comments
  - Class I Land Use impact due to project's inconsistency with recreation and public access policies, including Policy 7-18 and 7-3
  - No analysis of land use impact associated with loss of Edwards Pt. as a potential future park
  - Analysis of impacts to historic public access inadequate – recreation impacts should be Class I
  - EIR does not address diversity and unique quality of recreational experience at Edwards Pt.
  - Proposed beach access not adequate substitute for loss of access to Edwards Pt.



# EIR Issue Areas

## Land Use/Recreation

- Staff Response
  - Project is consistent with Policy 7-18, which calls for expansion of recreation and access opportunities
  - PC referring to Implementing Action of Policy 7-18, which encourages the County to acquire Edwards Pt.
  - Cannot impose that requirement on landowner
  - Policy 7-3 does not require bluff-top easement
    - requires that “all beach seaward of the base of the bluff” be dedicated where bluffs exceed 5 feet

# EIR Issue Areas

## Land Use/Recreation

- Staff Response
  - EIR acknowledges historic and ongoing access to Edwards Pt.
  - Use is relatively low and sporadic, in contrast to other areas such as Naples or Tajiguas Beach
  - Use for surfing dictated by infrequent swell, limits its value as a public recreational resource
  - EIR Revision Letter could add discussion of diversity/quality of use, but would not change EIR conclusions

# EIR Issue Areas

## Land Use/Recreation

- Staff Response
  - Tides limit current access to and use of Edwards Pt., especially for activities other than surfing
  - Beach between vertical access and Edwards Pt. generally passable during tides below +3 feet
  - Project would not interrupt access to Edwards Pt. from El Capitan State Beach or Dos Pueblos Canyon
  - EIR concludes that development would hinder overland beach access with 2 homes and increased human presence
  - Access would not be physically blocked by two home sites



# EIR Issue Areas

## Land Use/Recreation

- Staff Response
  - No quantitative threshold for determining significance of recreational impact
  - EIR concludes impacts are less than significant
    - Parking lot and beach access would create established, safe, and legal beach access available to greater segment of population
    - Use of and access to Edwards Pt. still possible during favorable tidal conditions
    - Surfers could continue to access Edwards Pt. as they do currently by walking along railroad tracks
    - Current access to and use of Edwards Pt. not substantial when compared to other more heavily used areas on Gaviota Coast

# EIR Issue Areas

## Growth Inducement

- PC Comments
  - EIR does not adequately discuss proposed shared water system and whether it could be expanded
  - Water system is growth inducing and could support further subdivision of ranch
  - EIR does not discuss effects of drought on project's water demand and water system design

# EIR Issue Areas

## Growth Inducement

- Staff Response
  - Project would not induce substantial growth or concentration of population
  - Water system sized and designed to serve up to 14 connections (2 connections per lot), not easily expanded to serve additional connections
  - Additional connections would require revision to CUP
  - Each application for residential development would need to demonstrate adequate water, regardless of water system



# Staff Recommendations

- Conclude that the EIR is adequate with addition of an EIR Revision Letter
- Direct staff to return to the PC for a full recommendation on the project applications