

4.2 AGRICULTURE, FOREST, AND MINERAL RESOURCES

This section describes existing agriculture, forest, and mineral resources within the county, identifies associated regulatory requirements, evaluates potential project and cumulative impacts, and identifies mitigation measures for any significant or potentially significant impacts related to implementation of the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update of the County of Santa Cruz (County) General Plan and Local Coastal Program (LCP) and County Code (Sustainability Update or project). The analysis is based on a review of existing studies and reports, and review of the proposed project's General Plan/LCP and Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) amendments that affect agriculture, forestry, and mineral resources.

4.2.1 Environmental Setting

4.2.1.1 Agricultural Resources

Agriculture has a long history in Santa Cruz County and continues to be one of the largest industries in the county. Agricultural resources include active agricultural operations on prime and productive non-prime soils, as well as non-commercial agricultural operations. Agricultural lands are areas that have been determined to be most suitable for a diversity of commercial and non-commercial farming operations such as the production of food, fiber, and ornamental crops, livestock, small family farming, and animal raising (County of Santa Cruz 2021a).

Agricultural Land Classifications and Designations

California Farmland Mapping

Important farmland in California is classified and mapped according to the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). Authority for the FMMP comes from Government Code section 65570(b) and Public Resources Code section 612, as further explained in section 4.2.2, Regulatory Setting. The FMMP provides an inventory of state agricultural lands in the Important Farmland Series Maps that is updated every two years. Agricultural land is rated according to several variables, including soil quality and irrigation status. The FMMP rating system classifies farmland according to the following criteria (California Department of Conservation 2019a):

- **Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. These include soils as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, formerly the Soil Conservation Service.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

- **Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climactic zones in California. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land.** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administration, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land.** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.

Important Farmlands in Santa Cruz County as mapped in the FMMP are shown on Figure 4.2-1. The amount of land within each FMMP classification is summarized in Table 4.2-1. According to the California Department of Conservation, 38,711 acres of land in Santa Cruz County were classified as agricultural land in 2018, of which 19,150 acres were classified as Important Farmland: 13,268 acres were classified as Prime Farmland, 2,263 acres were classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance, 3,374 acres were classified as Unique Farmland, and 245 acres were classified as Farmland of Local Importance (California Department of Conservation 2019b).

As shown on Figure 4.2-1, mapped Important Farmlands within Santa Cruz County are concentrated primarily in the southern portion of the county with some designated Important Farmland areas located along the north coast area of the county. Most of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are not mapped as Important Farmland in the FMMP. Except for two parcels, all parcels are designated Urban and Built-Up Land or Other Land (California Department of Conservation 2016). One parcel in the Summit planning area is partially mapped as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland. The second parcel is in the Aptos Hills planning area and is partially mapped as Prime Farmland.

Table 4.2-1 also summarizes agricultural land use trends in Santa Cruz County from 1990 to 2018 (the most recent available data from the California Department of Conservation) that shows a decline in lands in agricultural production over the last several decades, except for grazing lands which have increased (California Department of Conservation 2019b). From 1990 to 2018, the county lost about one quarter of

its Important Farmland (24%), while Urban and Built-Up Land increased by about the same percentage (22%).

Table 4.2-1. Agricultural Land in Santa Cruz County, 1990-2018

Land Use Category	Acreage				
	1990	2000	2010	2018	Change, 1990-2018
Prime Farmland	17,297	17,030	13,816	13,268	-4,029 (-23%)
Farmland of Statewide Importance	3,073	3,215	2,450	2,263	-810 (-26%)
Unique Farmland	4,251	4,395	3,761	3,374	-877 (-21%)
Farmland of Local Importance	583	869	548	245	-338 (-58%)
<i>Important Farmland Subtotal</i>	<i>25,204</i>	<i>25,509</i>	<i>20,575</i>	<i>19,150</i>	<i>-6,054 (-24%)</i>
Grazing Land	16,876	16,587	18,268	19,561	+2,685 (+16%)
<i>Agricultural Land Subtotal</i>	<i>42,080</i>	<i>42,096</i>	<i>38,843</i>	<i>38,711</i>	<i>-3,369 (-8%)</i>
Urban and Built-Up Land	27,082	29,293	32,749	32,950	5,868 (+22%)
Other Land	216,096	213,964	213,759	213,447	-2,649 (-1%)
Water Area	451	357	357	395	-56 (-12%)
<i>Total Area Inventoried¹</i>	<i>285,709</i>	<i>285,710</i>	<i>285,708</i>	<i>285,503</i>	<i>-206 (-0.1%)</i>

Source: California Department of Conservation 2019b.

Notes:

¹ Total area inventoried changed in 2018 due to adoption of updated county boundary file; adjacent counties gained or lost corresponding acreages.

County of Santa Cruz Agricultural Classifications

In Santa Cruz County, agricultural land includes commercial and non-commercial agricultural lands. Commercial agricultural land is land that is best suited to the commercial production of food, ornamental crops and livestock and meets the General Plan criteria for agricultural resource soils. Approximately 20.5% of the total land area of the county is commercial agricultural land as shown on Figure 4.2. All lands that meet the criteria for commercial agricultural lands, as defined in the General Plan Glossary, are designated by the County as Agricultural Resource.

Non-commercial agricultural land in the county is not necessarily viable commercially but may support agricultural activities and is distributed more broadly throughout the rural areas of the county as shown on Figure 4.2-2 and represents approximately 0.6% of the area of the county.

Santa Cruz County Agricultural Land Use Types. Section 16.50.030 of the SCCC designates agricultural land types based on classifications developed in the 1994 General Plan/LCP as amended over time. These types of agricultural lands are defined individually and in the aggregate as “agricultural resource land” or “commercial agricultural land.” Table 4.2-2 identifies the county’s agricultural land types, which are also depicted on Figure 4.2-2.

Three of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are designated as Type 2B agricultural lands in the County’s Geographic Information Services (GIS) data (County of Santa Cruz 2019). The sites include two parcels located off Glen Haven Road in the Summit planning area and one parcel off Hames Road in the Aptos Hills planning area. (See Figures 3-6B and 3-6D in Chapter 3, Project Description, for locations.) As indicated on Table 4.2-2, the Type 2B designation indicates geographically isolated agricultural lands with limited viability.

Table 4.2-2. Santa Cruz County Agricultural Land Types

Designation	Description
Type 1A	Viable Agricultural Land
Type 1B	Viable Agricultural Land in Utility Assessment Districts
Type 2A	Limited Agricultural Lands in Large Blocks
Type 2B	Geographically Isolated/Limited Agricultural Lands
Type 2C	Limited Agricultural Lands in Utility Assessment Districts
Type 2D	Limited Agricultural Lands Experiencing Use Conflicts
Type 2E	Vineyard Lands
Type 3	Coastal Zone Prime Agricultural Land

Source: SCCC

County of Santa Cruz Agricultural Zone Districts. The County’s agricultural zone districts include: Commercial Agriculture (CA), Agriculture (A), Agricultural Preserve (AP), and Agricultural Preserve and Farmland Security Combining (P). Approximately 54,487 acres of the county are zoned CA or A (County of Santa Cruz 2017). The intent of the CA zone district is to preserve commercial agricultural lands, while the A zone district provides for non-commercial agricultural uses, such as family farming and animal raising, and allows limited commercial agricultural activities. The AP zone district permits commercial agricultural and open lands under an agricultural preserve contract, but is proposed to be removed as the P combining district is now used for agricultural preserve properties. In addition, the RA (Residential Agriculture) zone district is single family residential zone district where small-scale commercial agriculture, such as animal-keeping and specialty crops, can take place in conjunction with the primary use of the property as residential. See Section 4.2.2.3, Regulatory Setting-Santa Cruz County Code, for further description of agricultural zoning districts in the county.

Williamson Act Lands

Lands enrolled in Williamson Act contracts, as a result of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, are located throughout the County’s unincorporated area. The Williamson Act enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses in order to preserve commercial agricultural land in return for reduced property tax assessments. See Section 4.2.2.2 for further description of the Williamson Act.

Approximately 20,000 acres are preserved under Williamson Act contracts in the county. The County of Santa Cruz stipulates eligibility for Williamson Act contracts according to land use designation and property size. Contracts are usually approved for a term of 10 or 20 years and automatically renewed every year, thereby maintaining the 10- or 20-year contract term. The contract is maintained at the original term until the contract is not renewed by the property owner or the County, or until the contract is cancelled by the property owner (County of Santa Cruz 2021). The County identifies parcels under contract with P combining district. When the Board of Supervisors approves a new Williamson Act contract, the parcel or parcels under contract are also rezoned to include the P combining district; a non-renewal or a cancellation of a contract requires a rezoning to remove the P combining district (County of Santa Cruz 2021d).

Agricultural Production in Santa Cruz County

The County has a mild climate with an average rainfall of 32 inches per year (depending on the region) and approximately 260 days of sunshine per year, as well as a variety of soils that create ideal conditions and long growing seasons for a diversity of agricultural crops, especially in the southern portion of the county (County of Santa Cruz 2017). According to the County's most recent Crop Report (County of Santa Cruz 2020), the total gross production value of the county's agricultural commodities was approximately \$636 million, including a timber value of \$6.4 million (see Table 4.2-3).

Crop harvesting occurred on at least 17,464 acres of agricultural crop land, not including grazing land or timberland areas. Fruit crops were the single largest production category by dollar value, comprising 63% of the county total. Berries dominate this category, including strawberries (\$194 million), raspberries (\$140 million), and blackberries (\$63 million). Taken together, berry production represented approximately 60% of the county's total gross production value. Nursery crops represented the second largest category (15%), including key crops such as potted plants, landscape plants, Christmas trees (\$108 million), and cut flowers and cut greens (\$12 million). Together, these two categories accounted for approximately 19% of the county's direct farm production values. Thirty-five crops are identified as export commodities, and 18 countries are reported as export trade partners with county growers (County of Santa Cruz 2020).

Organic farming and pastures comprised 7,917 acres in 2020, approximately 45% of the total harvested acreage, and was valued at approximately \$136 million. There are approximately 147 registered organic operations in Santa Cruz County, according to approximate acres and values registered with the State Organic Program (County of Santa Cruz 2020).

Santa Cruz County is also recognized as an important wine-growing region with 670 acres in wine grape production. In addition, after the State legalized cannabis cultivation and manufacturing for recreational use in 2016, cannabis has also become a significant specialty crop in the county.

In 2013, the agricultural industry employed 11,085 people, including 6,151 direct employees and 4,934 additional employees in related fields. Direct employment in agriculture amounted to 4.5% of all jobs in the county, or about 1 in 20 workers (County of Santa Cruz 2017). California Employment

Development Department (EDD) data for 2021 suggests that, depending on the time of year, agricultural jobs in the county as a whole ranged from 5,300 to 12,300 (EDD 2022).

Table 4.2-3. Overview of Agricultural Production in Santa Cruz County (2020)

Crop	Total Gross Value	Percentage of Total Gross Value	Harvested Acreage	Total Production
Strawberries	\$193,911,000	31%	2,137	72,581 tons
Raspberries	\$139,616,000	22%	2,050	20,193 tons
Blackberries	\$63,294,000	10%	1,049	8,969 tons
Apples (Fresh and Processed)	\$10,981,000	2%	2,030	31,465 tons
Wine Grapes	\$4,814,000	1%	670	1,601 tons
Miscellaneous Fruit ¹	\$452,000	0.03%	251	—
Brussels Sprouts	\$14,050,000	2%	935	12,164 tons
Lettuce (Head and Leaf)	\$25,357,000	4%	3,126	61,158 tons
Miscellaneous Vegetables ²	\$55,055,000	8%	3,661	—
Cut Flowers and Cut Greens ³	\$11,515,000	2%	313	—
Nursery Stock ⁴	\$108,146,000	17%	549	—
Livestock and Animal Products ⁵	\$7,166,000	1%	—	—
Timber	\$6,357,000	1%	—	10,171 million board feet ⁷
Industrial Hemp ⁶	—	—	63	—
Total	\$636,032,000	100%	17,464	204,613 tons of produce/ 10,171 million board feet of timber

Source: County of Santa Cruz 2020.

Notes: — = data not available.

¹ Includes boysenberries, blueberries, olallieberries, apricots, avocados, figs, kiwifruit, lemons, olives, peaches, pears, plums, persimmons, pomegranates, prunes, and walnuts.

² Includes artichokes, beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, chicory, collards, cucumbers, herbs, kale, leeks, mushrooms, mustard, peas, pumpkins, radicchio, spinach, squash, vegetable seed, and other vegetables.

³ Includes field and greenhouse production.

⁴ Includes indoor potted plants, landscape plants, and other plants, such as farm stock and Christmas trees.

⁵ Includes livestock, honey, and eggs.

⁶ The California Department of Food and Agriculture launched the Industrial Hemp Program in the spring of 2019. This program is in its infancy and no value was available for 2019.

⁷ The board foot or board-foot is a unit of measurement for the volume of lumber in the United States and Canada. It equals the volume of a one-foot length of a board, one foot wide and one inch thick.

4.2.1.2 Forest Resources

Definitions

"Forest land" is defined under Public Resources Code section 12220(g) as "land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that

allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.” The definition is part of the California Forest Legacy Program Act of 2007 that encourages the long-term conservation of productive forest lands by providing an incentive to owners of private forest lands to prevent future conversions of forest land and forest resources. The focus is on acquiring easements for conservation of forest resources.

The Z’berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act (Public Resources Code section 4526) defines “timberland” as “land...which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products....”

Forest Lands and Timber Production in Santa Cruz County

Forested lands and timberland occupy a substantial portion of Santa Cruz County, with large areas of timber production occurring in the Santa Cruz Mountains and inter-mountain valleys. Over 90,400 acres in the county are designated as timber resource lands as shown on Figure 4.2-3. Some of these lands are also protected by Williamson Act and Open Space contracts that limits the types of allowable land uses. These lands provide for the sustainable harvesting of timber, while also contributing to open space and providing important natural habitat.

The Timber Production (TP) zone district extends across approximately 71,400 acres of the county, primarily in the county’s north coast and mountain areas (County of Santa Cruz 2019). The intent of the TP district is to protect and maintain the county’s larger tracks of timberland, and to preserve agriculture and other open space uses where they are compatible with timberland uses. However, timberlands may occur within all zone districts of the county, and are not solely limited to TP zones. According to the most recent Crop Report for the county, the total gross production value of the county’s timber production was approximately \$6.4 million (see Table 4.2-3).

The county’s mountainous region, which encompasses the Santa Cruz Mountain range and includes the San Lorenzo Valley, Summit, and Skyline planning areas, contains the greatest extent of timberland in the county, with approximately 45,575 acres (50.3% of county total) (County of Santa Cruz 2021b). There are approximately 27,240 acres of TP-zoned land in the North Coast and Bonny Doon planning areas, which are dominated by a mix of public lands, including multiple state parks and U.S. Bureau of Land Management holdings, as well as, private agricultural and timber operations. The southern portion of the county contains the least amount of timberland with approximately 12,530 acres (16.8% of county total), located in the Aptos, Aptos Hills, Eureka Canyon, and Salsipuedes planning areas (County of Santa Cruz 2021b).

None of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are designated as Timber Resources in the County’s GIS data base (County of Santa Cruz 2021b).

4.2.1.3 Mineral Resources

Definitions

The State Geologist classifies mineral lands solely on the basis of geologic factors. Existing land-use, by statute, is not considered. Classification of an area as a Mineral Resource Zone-2 (MRZ-2) indicates the existence of a deposit that meets certain criteria for value and marketability. The state classification also includes MRZ-1, 3, and 4 resource zones. The first two of these categories are used to indicate if an area contains no resources (MRZ-1) or contains potential but presently unproven resources (MRZ-3). Areas where it is not possible to assign any of these categories are classified MRZ-4 (County of Santa Cruz 2021c). In compliance with the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), Santa Cruz County has prepared a Mining Ordinance. Mineral information is classified by the state. Under SMARA Santa Cruz County is the designated lead agency to regulate mining operations in the county.

Mineral Resources and Quarries in Santa Cruz County

According to the County's GIS data base, approximately 3,300 acres are in quarry/mineral processing uses. Mineral resources in Santa Cruz County are shown on Figure 4.2-4. A large area extends from the coast up through San Lorenzo Valley and south to Aptos with lands mostly classified as MRZ-3 and MRZ-4 with some locations of MRZ-1-designated lands. MRZ-1 and MRZ-3 lands are found in the southern portion of the county from Watsonville to the coast. None of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are designated as having mineral resources in the County's GIS data base (County of Santa Cruz 2019).

Eight quarries exist in the county, four of which are closed, Active and closed quarries are described below.

Active Quarries

Felton Quarry, operated by Granite Construction Company, mines granitic rock for construction aggregate. The mine contains a rock crushing and aggregate processing plant, and an asphaltic concrete plant. The permitted mining area encompasses approximately 86 acres. The mine is permitted to operate until at least 2029. The designated end use is open space. Reclamation of the mine will consist of establishment of a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. Concurrent reclamation is in progress as mining ceases in some areas. The mine is located west of the town of Felton (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Quail Hollow Quarry, operated by Granite Rock Company, mines sand from the Santa Margarita Sandstone for construction and industrial uses. The mine contains a sand processing plant and bulk sand dryer. The permitted area of the mine encompasses approximately 105 acres and mining is permitted to continue until the permitted reserves are exhausted. The designated end use is open space. Reclamation of the mine will consist of establishment of a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. Concurrent reclamation is in progress as mining

ceases in some areas. The mine is located within the sensitive Sandhills habitat near Quail Hollow County Park (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Wilder Quarry, operated by Granite Rock Company, mines sand from the Santa Margarita Sandstone for construction and landscape sand. The mine contains a sand processing plant. The disturbed area of the mine encompasses approximately 66 acres and mining is nearing the limits of the permitted mining area. The designated end use is open space. Reclamation of the mine will consist of establishment of a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. Concurrent reclamation is in progress as mining ceases in some areas. The mine is located near Wilder Ranch State Park (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Olive Springs Quarry, operated by Olive Springs Quarry Inc., mines gneissic granodiorite (granitic rock) for construction aggregate. The mine contains a rock crushing and aggregate processing plant, and an asphaltic concrete (AC) plant. The permitted mining area encompasses approximately 48 acres. The mine is permitted to operate until at least 2044. The designated end use is open space. Reclamation of the mine will consist of establishment of a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. The mine is located west of Nisene Marks State Park and the Soquel Demonstration Forest (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Closed Quarries

Bonny Doon Limestone and Shale Quarry, operated by CEMEX, mined marble and shale for the production of cement at the Davenport Cement Plant. The combined area of the limestone and shale quarries disturbed by mining encompassed approximately 234 acres. The mine ceased operation in 2009. The mine contains hard rock mining and crushing equipment, a maintenance shop, an office, rock storage silos, and a belt conveyor that traveled approximately three miles to the Cement Plant. Most of these facilities have not been removed. The designated end use is open space. Under the current reclamation plan, reclamation of the mine will consist of establishment of a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. Reclamation is in progress in some areas. The mine is located in Bonny Doon (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Hanson Quarry (also known as Kaiser Quarry), previously operated by Hanson Aggregates, mined sand from the Santa Margarita Sandstone for construction sand. The mined area encompassed approximately 200 acres. The mine ceased operation in 2003. All former mineral processing facilities have been removed and disturbed areas are being reclaimed to open space with a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. The mine is located within the sensitive Sandhills habitat west of the City of Scotts Valley (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Olympia Quarry (also known as Lonestar Quarry), previously operated by CEMEX, mined sand from the Santa Margarita Sandstone for construction sand. The mined area encompassed approximately 70 acres. The mine ceased operation in 2002. All former mineral processing facilities have been removed and disturbed areas are being reclaimed to open space with a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. The mine is located within the sensitive Sandhills habitat west of the City of Scotts Valley (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

Cabrillo Sand and Gravel, operated by Cabrillo Sand and Gravel, mined sand and gravel from the Aromas Formation for construction and landscape uses. The mined area encompassed approximately 4 acres. By 2005, all on-site excavation of sand had ceased. The Aptos Landscape Supply business has operated on the site since the mid-1960s and has become the primary activity on the parcel as mining activity has ceased. The mined areas have been reclaimed to open space with a native species vegetative cover on the disturbed lands similar to naturally occurring habitats in the surrounding area. The mine is located on Freedom Boulevard in Aptos (County of Santa Cruz 2021c).

4.2.2 Regulatory Framework

4.2.2.1 Federal Regulations

There are no federal regulations related to agriculture, forestry, and mineral resources that are applicable to the project.

4.2.2.2 State Regulations

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act; Section 51200- 51297.4)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, or Williamson Act, preserves agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive use contracts. Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses under minimum 10-year rolling term contracts. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value. The Williamson Act enables local governments to enter contracts with private landowners for restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses in return for reduced property tax assessments. Specifically, this legislation enables landowners who voluntarily agree to participate in the Williamson Act program, to receive assessed property taxes per the income-producing value of their property in agricultural use, rather than on the property's assessed market value.

California Right to Farm Act

The California Right to Farm Act (California Civil Code section 3482.5)—enacted in 1981—provides that a farming activity cannot be a public nuisance if all the following factors are met:

- 1) The activity is in support of the production of an agricultural commodity;
- 2) The agricultural activity is commercial in nature;
- 3) The activity is conducted “in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations in the same locality”;
- 4) The farming activity must have been in operation for at least three years; and
- 5) The farming activity was not a nuisance at the time it began.

It is noteworthy that the California Right to Farm Act does not require “best management practices” but instead simply allows adherence to “accepted” customs and practices. In addition, the statute specifically states that it prevails over any contrary provision of a city or county ordinance or regulation, but does allow cities and counties to require disclosures to be given to prospective home buyers that a dwelling is near an agricultural operation.

California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

Important Farmland in California is classified and mapped according to the California Department of Conservation’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). Authority for the FMMP comes from Government Code section 65570(b) and Public Resources Code section 612. Government Code section 65570(b) requires the Department of Conservation to collect or acquire information on the amount of land converted to or from agricultural use for every mapped county and to report this information to the Legislature. Public Resources Code section 612 requires the Department of Conservation to prepare, update, and maintain Important Farmland Series Maps and other soils and land capability information. The FMMP monitors the conversion of the State’s farmland to and from agricultural use. The FMMP maintains an inventory of state agricultural land and updates the Important Farmland Series Maps every two years. The maps do not necessarily reflect general plan or zoning designations, city limit lines, changing economic or market conditions, or other land use policies, although developed areas are designated as such. Explanation of FMMP designations and application in Santa Cruz County is included in Section 4.2-1, Environmental Setting.

California Public Resources Code

Agricultural land, forest land, and timberland within California are defined by the Public Resources Code as follows:

- Section 21060.1(a) defines “agricultural land” as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture land inventory and monitoring criteria, as modified for California.
- Section 12220(g) defines “forest land” as land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.
- Section 4526 defines “timberland” as land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the board on a district basis.

Public Resources section 21095 provides lead agencies with an optional methodology, the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) model, to ensure that significant effects on the environment of agricultural land conversions are quantitatively and consistently considered in the environmental review process. The LESA model evaluates measures of soil resource quality, a given project’s size, water resource availability,

surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource lands. For a given project, the factors are rated, weighted, and combined, resulting in a single numeric score that becomes the basis for making a determination of a project's potential significance regarding conversion of agricultural land.

California Timberland Productivity Act of 1982

The California Timberland Productivity Act (Government Code section 51100 et seq.) establishes the statewide basis for timberland production zoning. A county may zone lands for timberland production and thereby qualify the landowner for the preferential taxation provided for under the Forest Taxation Reform Act. Land within a timberland production zone (TPZ) is restricted to growing and harvesting timber and other compatible uses approved by the county. The use of this land must be “enforceably restricted” to growing and harvesting timber in order to qualify for preferential taxation.

The California Government Code includes definitions applicable to timber production and timber harvest, including the following:

- Section 51104(e) defines “timber” as trees of any species maintained for eventual harvest for forest products purposes, whether planted or of natural growth, standing or down, on privately or publicly owned land, including Christmas trees, but not nursery stock.
- Section 51104(f) defines “timberland” as privately owned land, or land acquired for state forest purposes, which is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, and which is capable of growing an average annual volume of wood fiber of at least 15 cubic feet per acre.
- Section 51104(g) defines “timberland production zone” (TPZ¹) to mean an area that has been zoned pursuant to section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses as defined under section 51104(h).
- Section 51112 identifies situations that would warrant a decision that a parcel is not devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses.
- Section 51113 allows the opportunity for a landowner to petition that his or her land be zoned for timberland production.

Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973

Commercial harvesting of timber on non-federal lands in California, whether or not the property is under timberland contract, is regulated under the state's Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act (Cal. Pub. Resources Code, § 4511 et seq.) and the related Forest Practice Rules (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14, chapters 4, 4.5, and 10). Through this legislation, the state has established a comprehensive and specialized program for reviewing and regulating the harvesting of timber. Harvest is strictly regulated through the review and

¹ Note: TPZ is used to represent “Timberland Production Zone” and “Timberland Preserve Zone” interchangeably in California Government Code section 51110. Both terms are intended to represent land zoned for the purposes of growing and harvesting timber. TPZ used in this chapter refers to land with such zoning.

approval of plans (e.g., Timber Harvesting Plan) by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). An approved Timber Harvesting Plan would be required prior to timber operations (as defined in section 4527 of the Act) conducted in support of Project-related activities.

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

The California State Legislature enacted the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975 (Cal. Pub. Resources Code, § 2710 et seq.) in response to land use conflicts between urban growth and mineral resource extraction. The intent of SMARA is to: 1) assure reclamation of mined lands, 2) encourage production and conservation of minerals, and 3) create and maintain surface mining and reclamation policy (regulations). SMARA also requires the prevention of adverse environmental effects caused by mining, the reclamation of mined lands for alternative land uses, and the elimination of public health and safety hazards from the effects of mining activities. One of the principal requirements of SMARA is the preparation of a reclamation plan and annual mine inspections, as well as the maintenance of a financial assurances cost estimate to guarantee post-mining reclamation of the mine site. The reclamation plan must be prepared by a mining applicant prior to initiation of mining activities and amendments to such plans are required for plan modifications. Reclamation plans must be approved by the SMARA lead agency (usually counties or cities) and the California Department of Conservation, Office of Mine Reclamation and are subject to environmental review under CEQA.

At the same time, SMARA encourages both the conservation and production of extractive mineral resources, requiring the State Geologist to classify land according to the presence or absence of significant mineral deposits. Local governments must consider this information before committing land with important mineral deposits to land uses incompatible with mining. The California Geological Survey is responsible for classifying land into Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) as follows:

- MRZ-1: Areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.
- MRZ-2: Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood exists for their presence.
- MRZ-3: Areas containing mineral deposits, the significance of which cannot be evaluated.
- MRZ-4: Areas where available information is inadequate for assignment to any other zone.

Sections 2762 and 2763 of the SMARA require that jurisdictions issue a Statement of Reasons when projects would result in the elimination of the potential to extract minerals in the areas containing regionally significant mineral resources. SMARA requires that the local agency decision makers consider this elimination of extraction potential in their decision on land use. The Statement of Reasons lists potential reasons to approve the proposed project and to include elimination of the potential for extraction of all this resource; decision makers may adopt or modify any of these. The Statement of Reasons must be submitted to the State Geologist and California State Mining and Geology Board for their review for a period of 60 days in conjunction with the environmental review of the proposed project.

4.2.2.3 Local Regulations

County of Santa Cruz General Plan/Local Coastal Program

The County of Santa Cruz General Plan/LCP is a comprehensive, long-term planning document for the unincorporated areas of the county and includes the County's LCP, which was certified by the CCC in 1994. The County General Plan/LCP provides policies and programs to establish guidelines for future growth and all types of physical developments. The Conservation and Open Space Element of the County's General Plan includes objectives and policies that pertain to agricultural resources. These include Objective 5.13 regarding commercial agricultural lands, 5.14 regarding non-commercial agricultural lands, and 5.15 regarding specialized agricultural uses, including greenhouses and aquaculture. However, the proposed project includes a new Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation (ARC) Element to replace the existing Conservation and Open Space Element, with amendments to existing goals, policies, and implementation strategies as described in Chapter 3 of this EIR and further reviewed in Section 4.2.3.3 below.

Santa Cruz County Code

Chapter 13.10, Zoning Regulations

As previously indicated, the County's agricultural zone districts include CA, A, AP and the P Combining District. The intent of the CA district is to preserve commercial agricultural lands and their economic integrity. The A district provides for non-commercial agricultural uses, such as family farming and animal raising, and allows limited commercial agricultural activities. Such non-commercial agricultural lands are identified by the County in order to recognize that they are still productive lands and have other values associated with large-lot open space characteristics. The AP district permits commercial agricultural uses for agricultural and open lands under an agricultural preserve contract; the AP zone district was used in the past to indicate parcels with Williamson Act agricultural preservation or open space contracts, or similar preservation easements. The P combining district is used as an overlay and is automatically placed on any property entering into a Williamson Act contract. In addition, all properties with existing contracts or preservation easements were rezoned in 2007 to include the P combining district instead of the historical AP zoning, replacing the AP zone district altogether. The RA district is defined by the SCCC as a residential use zone that permits both single-family residential and small-scale, secondary-use commercial agricultural uses.

The intent of the Timber Production (TP) zone district is to protect and maintain the county's larger tracks of timberland, and to preserve agriculture and other open space uses where they are compatible with timberland uses. Separate from the TP district are areas identified by the County as "Timber Resources."

The intent of the Mineral Extraction Industrial (M3) zone district is to identify the location of rock, sand, gravel, and other mineral resources within the county which are valuable to the orderly and economic development of the county and region; to conserve mineral resources for future use, and to ensure that the recovery of these resources is not preempted by other uses of the land on which they are located, or by the

introduction of noncompatible uses on other lands in the immediate vicinity; to give public notice of the intent to preserve and plan for the continued or ultimate use of mineral resources and proposed access thereto; and to allow the orderly economic extraction of minerals by designating the sites of existing and potential mines and allowing for the establishment, operation, expansion and reclamation of mineral extraction facilities and sites with minimum adverse impacts on aquifers, streams, scenic values, and surrounding land uses.

Chapter 16.50, Agricultural Land Preservation and Protection

SCCC Chapter 16.50 designates and protects commercially viable agricultural land which exists within the county, and which is in the public interest to preserve and protect for exclusive agricultural use. This chapter seeks to enhance and encourage agricultural operations within the county, and acknowledges certain agricultural land in the county, not presently of commercial value, that also merit protection.

Chapter 16.52, Timber Harvesting Regulations

SCCC Chapter 16.52 determines, protects, and maintains county timberlands through regulation of timber harvesting. The chapter encourages the continued production of forest products in compliance with performance standards, which emphasize protection of environmental and open space values while fostering increased productivity of forest land. This regulation also serves to protect, maintain, and improve the forest land of Santa Cruz County.

Chapter 16.54, Mining Regulations

SCCC Chapter 16.54 provides for the regulation and reclamation of mined lands to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and to protect public health and safety. The chapter recognizes the importance of conserving lands that contain significant mineral resources for future mineral development and encourages the production of minerals while giving consideration to other recreational and environmental values.

Chapter 16.34, Significant Trees Protection

SCCC Chapter 16.34 encourages and enforces the preservation of significant trees and forest communities on private and public property as necessary to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of the county. (These regulations only apply in the coastal zone.) Exemptions for timber operations, timber harvesting, permitted removals, and removal due to agricultural operations are provided.

17.01, Growth Management

Measure J was approved by Santa Cruz County voters and became law in 1978, codified as Chapter 17.01 of the SCCC. One purpose of this chapter is to state clearly various policies which should govern the future growth and development of Santa Cruz County. Another purpose is to provide for the enactment of a growth management system to regulate the character, location, amount, and timing of future development so as to achieve the stated policies. SCCC 17.01.030 includes policies that shall

guide the future growth and development of Santa Cruz County. These include the following that address agricultural, timber and mineral resources, as well as other natural resources:

- (A) Preserve Agricultural Lands. It shall be the policy of Santa Cruz County that prime agricultural lands and lands which are economically productive when used for agriculture shall be preserved for agricultural use.
- (F) Resource Protection. It shall be the policy of Santa Cruz County to prevent the division or other development of lands which contain timber resources, mineral resources, and wildlife habitat or other natural resources, except when any such development is conditioned so as to prevent the loss of or damage to such resources.

4.2.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.2.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds of significance used to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project related to agriculture, forestry, and mineral resources are based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and, if applicable, other agency standards, as listed below. A significant impact would occur if the project would:

- AGR-1 Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
- AGR-2 Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.
- AGR-3 Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.
- FOR-1 Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)).
- FOR-2 Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use or involve other change in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
- MIN-1 Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.
- MIN-2 Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

4.2.3.2 Analytical Methods

Potential Growth Assumptions

Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not directly result in impacts related to conversion of agricultural, forest or mineral lands. However, the proposed Sustainability Update includes amendments to both the General Plan/LCP and SCCC that could indirectly lead to future development that could affect these resources. The County Design Guidelines component of the proposed project does not include guidelines related to agricultural, forest or mineral resources. The other components of the proposed project that could indirectly lead to development, which could affect these resources include:

- Amendments to the General Plan/LCP include policies that support new development, redevelopment, and potential intensified redevelopment, primarily within the Urban Services Line (USL), as well as amendments to the agricultural policies in the ARC Element.
- Amendments to the SCCC include allowing new ancillary agricultural support uses, including agricultural tourism and education, farmstays, agricultural research and development, in agricultural zones, and allowing agricultural service establishments as a new use on CA land. Amendments also recognize the need for flexibility in the siting of essential public/quasi-public facilities and would allow this use in agricultural zones under limited circumstances.
- Amendments to General Plan/LCP and/or zone maps for 23 specified parcels.

As described in Section 4.0, Introduction to Analyses, this environmental impact report (EIR) estimates that the proposed project has the potential to accommodate approximately 4,500 housing units throughout the county over existing conditions as shown on Table 4.0-2, with approximately 75% projected to occur within urban areas. This EIR also estimates of the potential to accommodate approximately 6,210,000 square feet of non-residential uses as shown on Table 4.0-3, with approximately 60% expected to occur within urban areas. These forecasts provide an estimate of potential growth that could occur as a result of adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update for the purpose of evaluation in this EIR. This estimate of growth may or may not occur, and this estimate does not establish a limit to development. Annual limits for residential units are set annually by the County pursuant to Measure J, and SCCC provisions as explained in Section 4.13 of this EIR, Population and Housing. However, within the CA and TP zone districts, there is a limit of one single family dwelling per parcel along with any associated accessory structures, and residential density is also limited in the A zone district, such that residential development in these zone districts is not anticipated to increase substantially as a result of the proposed amendments. Additionally, some of this projected development and growth would occur under the existing General Plan/LCP without the proposed project.

EIR Notice of Preparation Comments

Public and agency comments were received during the public scoping period in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP), which is included in Appendix A. A summary of the comments received during

the scoping period for this EIR, as well as written comments received, are included in Appendix B. Comments related to agriculture, forest, and mineral resources include the following:

- 12,000 acres of agricultural land between Elkhorn Slough and Manresa State Beach should be purchased and left fallow to stop agricultural pumping and protect Pajaro Valley from seawater intrusion.

To the extent that issues identified in public comments involve potentially significant effects on the environment according to CEQA and/or are raised by responsible agencies, they are identified and addressed in this EIR. The comment above suggests removing lands from agricultural production that are partially located in Monterey County in order to reduce groundwater pumping. The County of Santa Cruz does not have control over private lands and such a proposal would adversely affect agricultural lands. Therefore, this comment is acknowledged but does not pertain to impacts to agricultural resources and is not further considered in this section. However, the comment is included in Section 4.16, Utilities and Service Systems (Water Supply).

4.2.3.3 Project Impact Analysis

Impact AGR-1: Farmland Conversion (Significance Threshold AGR-1). Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update could indirectly lead to conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use. (*Potentially Significant and Unavoidable*)

General Plan/LCP Amendments

The proposed ARC Element indicates that since the 1970s, County land use policies have preserved agricultural land by focusing development in urbanized areas where services are available. Agricultural policies that limit land divisions and development density and allow only agricultural uses and uses compatible with agriculture on commercial agricultural land, ensure that important farmland remains largely undeveloped. The proposed project retains policies to protect both commercial and non-commercial agricultural lands and maintain all lands designated and zoned as agricultural resource in an agricultural land use designation. Proposed policy amendments also add a new reference to indicate that prime and unique farmlands are associated with the County's Type 1A, 1B, and 3 agricultural lands (ARC-1.1.2).

The proposed amendments retain principal and conditionally uses permitted on agriculturally designated lands, but expands uses to include small-scale, ancillary agricultural support uses, such as marketing of products grown on the site, agri-tourism, and special events that are compatible with the primary agricultural use. These uses consist of events that typically would not result in construction of new structures that would convert prime agricultural soils to non-agricultural uses.

There are some proposed modifications that could indirectly lead to conversion of agricultural lands. The proposed amendments clarify that “agriculturally oriented structures” include one residence, one accessory unit, and farmworker housing (ARC-1.1.11). However, the proposed amendments add “interim or permanent public/quasi-public uses that the County has determined to be of significant benefit to the public health, safety and welfare and for which mitigation will be provided as feasible,” and amendments to facilitate the location of such essential facilities, while addressing the protection of agricultural resources, are included in several policies. This is in addition to structures associated with recycled wastewater facilities as currently exists. The updated code also allows new agricultural support uses ancillary to an agricultural use on CA land, including agricultural service establishments and agricultural research and development facilities. In addition, the proposed amendments add breweries and distilleries to wineries as discretionary agricultural uses, but where sited and designed to protect agricultural lands and uses and to minimize impacts with adjacent lands (ARC-2.3.1).

While adding new allowable uses on CA-zoned parcels, the proposed project also adds new requirements and findings for projects in order to limit and mitigate for the conversion of agricultural land. For any proposed residential or agricultural support project that would result in a total development footprint on agricultural resource soils that exceeds 35,000 square feet, findings per SCCC 13.10.313(E) require an applicant to provide an analysis of alternative sites and evaluate alternative designs to reduce the total development area on agricultural resource soils to less than 35,000 square feet. For projects that would result in a total development area on agricultural resource soils exceeding 35,000 square feet, the applicant is required to place farmable portions on the subject parcel or farmable areas on other sites owned by the agricultural operator, equal or greater in size than the total development area of the subject parcel, in a permanent agricultural easement to mitigate or partially mitigate for the conversion of farmland and to protect the land for future farming use.

Thus, limited conversion of agricultural lands could occur with future structural development as currently permitted (residential, support services, and wastewater treatment facilities), as well as other structural development that may result from the project, including other public facilities, breweries and distilleries. Although no specific projects or sites are known, it is possible that some future development, though limited, could result in conversion of Important Farmlands as defined by the state’s FMMP. However, for any residential or agricultural support development that would result in a total development footprint on farmable land that exceeds 35,000 square feet, the conversion of land would be would require placement of a permanent conservation easement on the subject parcel or another CA-zoned parcel as described above.

While conversion of prime agricultural lands could occur under the existing General Plan/LCP policies as well as with the proposed amendments, the proposed project generally retains existing requirements for demonstrating that agricultural lands are either not viable for commercial operation or would not impact the viability of agricultural lands prior to permitting any conversion to non-agricultural uses or rezoning to another zone district, and potential land divisions on commercial agricultural lands would continue to be restricted, including for public/quasi-public uses (ARC-1.2.1, ARC-1.3-1).

While new public/quasi-public facilities could potentially be sited on prime agricultural land, the proposed amendments specify circumstances under which commercial agricultural lands may be converted for development of public/quasi-public uses. Such uses would be allowed where necessary to address a compelling public health and safety or environmental concern, subject to required findings in the SCCC and to appropriate environmental review and mitigation (ARC-1.3.1). Nonetheless, the proposed amendments could indirectly lead to conversion of prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses as a result of siting of public facilities, although the amount of land converted would not be expected to be substantial.

Additionally, the proposed amendments indicate that agricultural support facilities, where permitted, should avoid agricultural resources soils and where this is not feasible, uses should be sited to avoid and minimize loss of agricultural resources soils and impacts to farming (ARC-1.1.12). However, the County considers agricultural support uses and associated structures, such as agricultural service establishments, to be agricultural uses. As such, the establishment of these uses would not be subject to ARC-1.3.1, and these uses could be placed on agricultural resource soils, leading to potential conversion of prime agricultural lands. However, as noted above, agricultural support and residential projects that would result in a total development footprint on the parcel exceeding 35,000 square feet, would be required to provide a permanent conservation easement on the subject parcel or another CA-zoned parcel that would mitigate for the conversion of agricultural land.

Furthermore, a new policy clarifies development density and intensity limits on commercial agricultural land (as well as non-commercial agricultural land) (as summarized on Table 3-6 in Chapter 3) in order to preserve the land for long-term commercial agricultural use (ARC-1.1.4), although existing maximum building height and density standards are not changed from what is permitted in existing agricultural zone districts. A range of potential lot coverages for buildings is estimated. Generally, implementation of the proposed ARC Element of the County’s General Plan/LCP, including policies and implementing strategies as summarized on Table 4.2-4, as well as other regulations, would serve to reduce impacts related to conversion of agricultural lands.

Table 4.2-4. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Uses

Potential Impact	Policies
Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain designated agricultural resource lands in the Agricultural Land (AG) Land Use designation. (ARC-1.1.3) • Limit development density and intensity on commercial agricultural land to preserve for long-term commercial agricultural use. (ARC-1.1.4) • Maintain all designated Agricultural Resource lands in the CA zone, or the A-P zone district (Agriculture zone with the Agriculture Preserve (P) combining district). (ARC-1.1.5) • Conditional uses for CA zoned lands will be subject to standards that specify siting and development criteria. (ARC-1.1.7) • Allow only agriculturally oriented structures or dwellings on CA-zoned lands. (ARC-1.1.11.)

Table 4.2-4. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Conversion of Agricultural Lands to Non-Agricultural Uses

Potential Impact	Policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site agricultural support facilities to avoid or minimize loss of agricultural resource soils. (ARC-1.1.12) • Allow land divisions on commercial agricultural land only for exclusive agricultural purposes and where the minimum parcel size is maintained, with limited exception for public/quasi-public uses. (ARC-1.2.1), • Allow land divisions of CA-zoned lands to use new parcel(s) for exclusive agricultural uses, or for public/quasi-public uses, and related uses, that address a compelling public health or environmental concern and where such divisions will not impair economic viability or have an adverse impact on the agricultural economy or on coastal resources, where the maximum of land feasible is maintained in agricultural production, and where the division is in the interest of public health, safety and welfare,. (ARC-1.2.1, ARC-1.2.2, ARC-1.2.4) • Conversion and/or development of CA-zoned lands to non-agricultural uses is allowed only where the land is determined not to be viable for agriculture, with limited exception to allow an essential public/ quasi-public use that is necessary to address a compelling public health and safety or environmental concern, that will not impair the viability of, or create potential conflicts with, other commercial agricultural lands in the area. (ARC-1.3.1) • An agricultural viability study is required for development applications that propose to convert CA and prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. (ARC-1.3.2) • Prohibit conversion of CA-zoned lands around urban areas except where viability of existing CA uses are already limited by conflict with urban uses. (ARC-1.3.3) • Structures shall be sited to minimize conflict with productive commercial agricultural lands. (ARC-1.4.5) • Prohibit removal of indigenous prime soil used as a growing medium for container plants. (ARC-2.1.3) • Demonstrate an overriding public service need before approving the siting of hazardous waste management facilities in commercial agricultural lands. (Public Safety Policy 6.7.9)

Santa Cruz County Code Amendments

The proposed Sustainability Update also amends portions of the zoning ordinance related to allow uses, development standards, and permit requirements in agricultural zones to align with General Plan/LCP policies, including the proposed amendments, and state laws. The proposed SCCC amendments include new provisions for temporary uses and events on agriculturally zoned land, including agri-tourism, educational uses, and homestays, other agricultural support uses consistent with the proposed General Plan/LCP policy amendments, including breweries distilleries, agricultural research and development establishments, essential public/quasi-public uses, and agricultural service establishments as a new use

on CA. Criteria and findings have been updated with new guidance for siting and designing projects to protect commercial agricultural land and agricultural operations.

The purpose of the agri-tourism and education regulations is to allow parcels with a primary use of agriculture to carry on income-producing activities including, but not limited to, marketing of products grown on site, farm dinners, educational activities, classes, workshops, tours, mazes, and petting zoos. The new regulations require agri-tourism and educational activities to be ancillary to the principal agricultural use of the parcel and also require these activities to be sited in a manner that minimizes disturbance of prime agricultural soils, with the exception of farm dinners and temporary placement of tables, chairs, and associated furniture. Agri-tourism events attracting higher levels of visitors would require a use permit, and the maximum number of guests per event and the maximum number of annual events allowed would be stated in the conditions of approval based on factors including, but not limited to, parking availability, safety and adequacy of vehicular access, septic capacity, maximum building occupancy, site conditions, and neighborhood compatibility. Therefore, these temporary events would support the primary commercial agricultural use on a property, would be sited to prevent impacts to agricultural lands in production, and generally would include limited, if any, new structures.

Proposed revisions to SCCC section 13.10.637 add breweries and distilleries as permitted uses along with wineries in the RA, RR, CA, and A zone districts. The proposed revisions also provide new standards for these types of facilities and structures based on new definitions of small, medium and large facilities. In the CA zone district, the winery or beer manufacturing facility shall be ancillary to the principal agricultural use of the parcel or site, which may include wine grapes, hops, or other agricultural crops. The proposed amendments accommodate on-site marketing for wineries while adding standards to minimize impacts to residential parcels, establishing annual production volumes and regulating structure size, parking, sales limitations, hours of operations, and indoor and outdoor events, including permit requirements for amplified music during wine tastings and events.

The proposed revisions would also permit a bed and breakfast inn as a new use in the CA zone, which must be situated within the primary residence on the subject property and comply with SCCC 13.10.691. In addition, agricultural farmstays would be allowed in the A and CA zones with a maximum of six guest rooms allowed within the principal residence, in an accessory dwelling unit, or within a habitable accessory structure, but guest rooms would not be permitted in barns, non-habitable structures, agricultural employee housing or storage facilities. The farmstay must be ancillary to the principal agricultural use on the parcel. On properties within the CA zone district, either a farmstay or bed and breakfast is allowed, but both a farmstay and bed and breakfast are not permitted on the same parcel.

SCCC section 13.10.632 provides revised standards for agricultural processing facilities. Section 13.10.648 modifies standards for agricultural service establishments, allowing for agricultural service establishments as a new use on CA land. In addition, agricultural research and development facilities would be a new permitted use on CA and A. Provisions for storage of indoor and outdoor storage of agricultural equipment have also been added to clarify requirements.

To protect commercial agricultural land, SCCC section 13.10.314 requires all conditional development on commercial agricultural (CA) land to be sited on the parcel to protect agricultural land and

commercial agricultural operations on the subject parcel and in the area. An analysis of alternative sites is required for larger agricultural support uses, including large agricultural processing facilities, agricultural equipment storage, wineries, and agricultural service establishments. To further protect agricultural soils, a development area threshold for agricultural support uses has been added to the code, defined as “the total floor area plus the total area covered by structures, paving, or other impermeable or semipermeable surface material such as baserock or gravel.” When a project exceeds the specified development area, then additional requirements would apply, such as demonstrating there are no alternative designs or other sites available off of agricultural resource soils to accommodate the use (see SCCC 13.10.632 - 13.10.644 for special standards and findings applicable to agricultural support uses to protect agricultural land and the agricultural economy).

The proposed amendments would add public/quasi-public uses, in addition to existing recycled wastewater facilities, which have a significant benefit to public health, safety, and welfare as a permitted use on agricultural land. Parcel divisions and lot line adjustments are permitted for these uses, subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission, with loss of agricultural land mitigated. For larger projects, an alternative sites analysis is required.

While some new structural development may occur as a result of the proposed Sustainability Update, the proposed project also indirectly supports continued viability of commercial agricultural operations with support for uses that are ancillary to and support the primary commercial agricultural use. The proposed project supports the needs of diverse local farming operations, allowing uses on CA land that support agriculture while providing standards and appropriate reviews to protect agricultural land, including: 1) allowance of agri-tourism, which can be important to many smaller local farms, and which includes classes and field trips, farm stays, and farm-to-table dinners, with discretionary review required for larger or more frequent events, 2) allowance of agricultural service establishments, such as farm equipment repair or sales, on commercial agricultural land with discretionary approval, and by allowing such uses when they are compatible with and secondary to the main agricultural use, 3) allowance of agricultural support uses, such as agricultural equipment storage, to serve larger farming operations extending over multiple parcels, while requiring that the storage is compatible with and secondary to the main agricultural use, and 4) continued allowance of housing for agricultural employees (up to 12 units) on agricultural land as a principally permitted agricultural use, as required by state law. A site development permit would be required to ensure appropriate siting.

Parcel Map Changes

As previously indicated, most of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are not mapped as Important Farmland in the FMMP. Except for two parcels, all lands are designated Urban and Built-Up Land or Other Land (California Department of Conservation 2016). Therefore, any future development that may be indirectly accommodated by the Proposed Sustainability Update would not result in conversion of Important Farmlands. One parcel in the Summit planning area is partially mapped as Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland. However, the proposed redesignation for this property would amend the General Plan designation from

Agriculture and Rural Residential to just Agriculture, which protects and slightly expands the existing agricultural land use designation for the property. The other parcel in the Aptos Hills planning area is partially designated Prime Farmland in the FMMP. However, the proposed amendment would redesignate a portion of the property from CA to A, but the area is located outside of the mapped Prime Farmland.

Conclusion

The proposed project includes amendments to the General Plan/LCP and SCCC that could accommodate future structural development related to construction of residential uses, which are currently allowed, as well as new potential ancillary uses, including, breweries and distilleries, agricultural support services, and public/quasi-public facilities. It is possible that some future development, though limited, could result in conversion of Important Farmlands as defined by the state's FMMP, although the project retains existing policies to limit conversion, as well as other controls that would serve to avoid or minimize impacts related to conversion of Important Farmland as summarized in Table 4.2-4, and implementing code language and special findings discussed in this section. In the case of public/quasi-public facilities, such uses would only be permitted based on compelling public health and safety considerations. However, should a future residential, agricultural support facility, or public/quasi-public projects result in the conversion of Important Farmlands, the impact would be considered *potentially significant*.

There is no known mitigation measure that would reduce the impact to a less-than-significant level. As indicated above, proposed SCCC regulations would require that any development exceeding 35,000 square feet in size to place an agricultural property of equal or greater size in a permanent agricultural easement. This would provide better protection to other existing agricultural lands, but would not fully mitigate the impacts. Nonetheless, Mitigation Measure AGR-1 is recommended, which would add public/quasi-public facilities to this requirement.

In addition, as indicated in Section 4.2.2.2, CEQA provides lead agencies with an optional methodology, the LESA model, to assess impacts to agricultural lands. The LESA model evaluates measures of soil resource quality, project size, water resource availability, surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource lands. For a given project site, the factors are rated, weighted, and combined, resulting in a single numeric score that becomes the basis for making a determination of a project's potential significance based on scoring totals identified in the model. Therefore, individual projects, including agricultural support uses for which discretionary review is required, would be subject to CEQA review and any loss of agricultural land could be evaluated using the LESA system to determine if impacts would be significant, which in some cases may determine that the impact is less than significant.

In conclusion, compliance with the County's policies and regulations to protect commercial agricultural lands, including prime lands, and state requirements, would serve to generally avoid or minimize potential indirect impacts of the project related to conversion of Important Farmlands to non-agricultural uses. However, there may be some limited situations where conversion of agricultural

lands may occur, and conversion of prime agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses, even though the total amount likely would be minimal, would still be considered a *significant and unavoidable impact*.

Mitigation Measures

To address the conversion of farmland resulting from locating an essential public/quasi-public facility on agricultural land, implementation of Mitigation Measure AGR-1 would reduce the impact related to conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but not to a less-than-significant level, and the impact of conversion of these farmlands would be *significant and unavoidable*.

MM AGR-1: Conversion of Agricultural Land Due to Location of an Essential Public/Quasi-public Facility. Amend proposed language in SCCC 13.10.313(E) to add public/quasi-public facilities to the types of projects for which special findings and requirements apply to address conversion of agricultural land.

Impact AGR-2: Conflicts with Agricultural Zoning (Significance Threshold AGR-2). Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract. **(No Impact)**

The proposed project includes elimination of the existing AP zone district because this zone is no longer needed since creation of the P-combining district (SCCC 13.10.473). Therefore, the Sustainability Update proposes to remove the AP district from the code as parcels zoned AP were previously rezoned with the P combining district. In addition, the P Combining District standards in SCCC sections 13.10.471-473 have been updated to clarify that the CA district use and development standards apply to parcels in this district unless otherwise indicated on individual parcel contracts. Also, clarification has been added to SCCC section 13.10.312 that any lands enrolled in the Williamson Act Program are included in the P Combining District.

The proposed project includes amendments to existing General Plan/LCP policies related to agricultural resources and proposes accompanying changes to the SCCC, which ensures that the zoning regulations are consistent with the General Plan/LCP. The proposed changes would not result in conflicts with existing zoning regulations for agricultural uses or Williamson Act contracts. The proposed General Plan/LCP amendments include an implementing strategy to support and monitor compliance with Agricultural Preserve (Williamson Act) contracts and a covenants enforceable by the County to protect the use of the commercial agricultural land for agricultural uses (ARC-1.2b).

Williamson Act contracts typically allow for the construction of a single-family dwelling (a maximum of 2,500 square feet) and other structures directly associated with the commercial agricultural use of the property, such as barns or other agricultural buildings. Home sites are allowed on contracted land but are limited in purpose and number and must be related to the agricultural use of the land. In addition, any home site on land subject to a Williamson Act contract must follow local ordinances. Proposed

uses or structures on parcels under contract are subject to a Compatibility Review (State Government Code 51238.1) (County of Santa Cruz 2017).

None of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are protected under Williamson Act contracts. Five of the parcels are currently designated Agriculture in the General Plan/LCP. Two of these parcels are located along Freedom Boulevard and total approximately 0.55 acre, which are zoned Public Facilities with Airport Influence Area Combining District (PF-AIA). The project proposes to amend the General Plan land use designation to Public Facilities (P) to be consistent with existing developed uses on the properties, an electrical substation and community club. The properties are developed and adjacent to developed properties and the General Plan/LCP amendments would not conflict with existing zoning for the properties, which are not agricultural zones.

Two other parcels, totaling 8.3 acres in the Aptos Hills planning area, are designated Agriculture and Rural Residential, but are zoned CA. The project proposes redesignation to Agriculture, which would increase agriculturally designated land, and there would be no change to the existing CA zoning for the sites. Thus, the proposed map amendments would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses. The fifth parcel, also located in the Aptos Hills planning area, is also designated Agriculture and Rural Residential and zoned CA. The project proposes to amend the zoning to A for the portion of the property designated Rural Residential where no agricultural resource soils exist in order to make the zoning consistent with the General Plan, which would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses as the A zone is an agricultural designation.

Therefore, the project would not result in conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract resulting in *no impact*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required as a significant impact has not been identified.

Impact AGR-3: Indirect Conversion of Agricultural Lands (Significance Threshold AGR-3). Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. ***(Less than Significant)***

The proposed project would not directly or indirectly involve changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Non-agricultural uses and development adjacent to agricultural lands can result in potential conflicts that can indirectly lead to conversion of agricultural lands. These include complaints by adjacent neighbors of dust, noise, odors, potential “drift” of pesticide application, and other disturbances associated agricultural operations. As development occurs near agricultural areas, farmers also are confronted with issues of theft, vandalism, and urban pest control in landscaped areas associated with urban development. Additionally, the size and siting of structures associated with some operations, such as greenhouses or structures, can be perceived as a nuisance or incompatible use. In addition, extension

of water and sewer utilities into agricultural areas can have an indirect growth-inducing effect to convert agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.

Establishment of buffers can help minimize conflicts between agricultural and urban land uses. The buffer setback is intended to minimize potential conflicts through the provision of distance as a physical barrier to noise, dust, odor and other effects of normal commercial agricultural operations such as plowing, discing, harvesting, application of agricultural chemicals or rearing of animals. The proposed Sustainability Update retains existing General Plan/LCP policies and regulations to provide agricultural buffers and other measures to reduce potential conflicts with non-agricultural land uses. To protect agricultural land from potential conflicts with non-agricultural uses, the existing required 200-foot agricultural buffer setback between habitable uses (includes outdoor areas) and commercial agricultural land is retained. The buffer is measured from the proposed habitable area or structure to the property line of CA-zoned land. Proposals to construct within the 200-foot buffer would be considered by the Agricultural Policy Advisory Commission (APAC) at a public hearing. The buffer requirements are codified in SCCC section 13.10.313.

In addition to required agricultural buffers, the proposed project retains other policies that serve to avoid or reduce conflicts with agricultural operations summarized in Table 4.2-5. These include requirements for windbreaks in buffers (ARC-1.4.4), siting of structures to minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations (ARC-1.4.5), and recordation of agricultural notification for land divisions and properties adjacent to commercial agricultural lands (ARC-1.4.13 and 1.4.14). The purpose of these notifications to inform property owners about adjacent agricultural practices and advise them to be prepared to accept “inconveniences or discomfort from normal operations.” Landscaped buffers do not totally eliminate odors and noise. Thus, to minimize potential complaints from non-agricultural uses adjacent to agricultural uses, the County of Santa Cruz and other agencies require that buyers of properties adjacent to agricultural operations be advised of existing adjacent agricultural uses and operations during the real estate transaction process. Recordation of an acknowledgment of adjacent agricultural uses as part of the parcel deed is required at the time of property purchase or issuance of building permit. This “Buyer Beware” program, which has been in effect since 1979 within the county, requires landowners adjacent to designated agricultural lands to acknowledge through deed recordation that they are aware of adjacent agricultural uses, and are prepared to accept potential occasional inconveniences and discomfort associated with adjacency to normal agricultural operations.

Additionally, proposed policy revisions would discourage, rather than prohibit, expansion of County-controlled sewer district boundaries in the absence of public health considerations for existing development (ARC-1.1.13). However, the proposed amendments would allow extension of sewer and water lines on commercial agricultural lands in the coastal zone, but only under specified circumstances that would require safeguards to ensure that such facilities would not result in the subsequent conversions of commercial agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses due to the utility extensions (ARC-1.1-14). These circumstances include water transmission lines along the North Coast to the City of Santa for irrigation and related agricultural uses, including limited agricultural employee/farmworker housing; sewer transmission lines to and from the City of Watsonville sewage

treatment plant; .water and sewer lines to serve existing development which has failing wells and/or sewage disposal systems; and placement of water and sewer lines that provide access to wastewater treatment and distribution facilities, if the purpose is to prevent saltwater intrusion, recharge groundwater basins, provide tertiary treated wastewater for agricultural uses and purposes; and/or provide service to other public/quasi-public uses and facilities as may be approved by the County (ARC-1.14). ARC-1.1.15 would, however, prohibit hookups to trunk lines through commercial agricultural lands and levying of assessment fees against commercial agricultural land for the construction of sewage transmission lines running through the commercial agricultural parcels.

Table 4.2-5. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Indirect Conversion of and/or Conflicts with Agricultural Lands

Potential Impact	Policies
Other changes that could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conflicts with agricultural uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements for State Parks development within the coastal zone. (ARC-1.1.8) • Require 200-foot buffer setback to the property line for non-agricultural habitable or commercial uses adjacent to a parcel in the CA zone district or P Combining District. (ARC-1.4.1) • Incorporate windbreaks into buffers as warranted and feasible to eliminate hazard of pesticide drift. (ARC-1.4.4) • Site structures to minimize conflicts with productive commercial agricultural lands. (ARC-1.4.5) • Require Agricultural Notification Recordation for land divisions within 200 feet of commercial agricultural lands. (ARC-1.4.12) • Require Agricultural Statement of Acknowledgment for property owners adjacent to agricultural lands. (ARC-1.4.13) • Discourage expansion of County-controlled sewer boundaries on Type 1 and 3 commercial agricultural lands. (ARC-1.1.13) • Allow the placement of water or sewer lands on CA-zoned lands in the coastal zone only under certain circumstances (ARC-1.1.14) with required safeguards (ARC-1.1.15).

Therefore, with implementation of the proposed policies and regulations, the Sustainability Update would not result in changes or conditions that would indirectly lead to conversion of agricultural lands due to potential conflicts and/or introduction of services, which would be considered a *less-than-significant impact*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required as a significant impact has not been identified.

Impact FOR-1: Conflicts with Forest/Timberland Zoning (Significance Thresholds FOR-1 and FOR-2). Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not conflict with or cause rezoning of forest or timberlands. **(No Impact)**

The proposed Sustainability Update would not lead to development that would conflict with timber production zoning or result in conditions that could lead to conversion of forest or timber lands. The majority of the growth anticipated as a result of the proposed project would occur within the existing USL and would not affect forest or timber lands. The proposed amendments retain existing policies and regulations that seek to maintain and protect timberlands and limit residential development as summarized in Table 4.2-6, which would serve to avoid or minimize potential impacts to forest and timber lands.

Table 4.2-6. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Conflicts with Zoning or Conversion of Forest or Timber Lands

Potential Impact	Policies
Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land or timberland zoned Timberland Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate Timberlands (ARC-7.1.1) • Land division and density requirements for TP-zoned lands. (ARC-7.1.4) • Conditions required for development on timber lands (ARC-7.1.5 and 7.1.6) • Locate new development on TP lands on non-timbered portion of the property. (ARC-7.1.7) • Encourage owners to apply for TP zoning. (ARC-7.1.9) • Do not support rezoning of timberland from TP unless consistent with the Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976 and County regulations. (ARC-7.1.10) • Require Timber Statement of Acknowledgment for new land division or development adjacent to timberlands. (ARC-7.1.12)
Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support use of working lands (e.g., Soquel Demonstration Forest) for research, education, and demonstration of innovative timber harvesting and forestry techniques. (PPF-2.5.2)

Updates to use and development standards for timber production uses in section 13.10.371-378 include a new requirement for discretionary use permits for certain agricultural uses to allow for compatibility analysis and ensure the use is compatible with timber production. Additionally, clarification has been added that development shall not be located in the timbered portion of a TP zone site, and that special compatibility findings are required in the TP district only for projects that trigger discretionary use or site development permits.

The project does not propose any changes to General Plan/LCP land use designations or zoning for properties designated Timberland Production. Additionally, none of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are designated or zoned for timber production nor are any parcels located to lands zoned TP. Therefore, with implementation of proposed policies and regulations, including SCCC Chapter 16.52 that regulates timber harvesting, the proposed project would not conflict with or cause rezoning of forest or timber lands, resulting in *no impact*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required as a significant impact has not been identified.

Impact MIN-1: Loss of Mineral Resources (Significance Thresholds MIN-1 and MIN-2). Adoption and implementation of the proposed Sustainability Update would not result in loss of availability of known mineral resources or locally important mineral resources. **(No Impact)**

The proposed Sustainability Update would not lead to development that would result in impacts to mineral resources. The majority of the growth anticipated as a result of the proposed project would occur within the existing USL and would not affect mineral resources. The proposed amendments retain existing policies and regulations that seek to maintain and protect mineral resources as summarized in Table 4.2-7, which would serve to avoid or minimize potential impacts to mineral resources.

Table 4.2-7. Proposed and Retained General Plan/LCP Policies that Avoid/Minimize Impacts Related to Loss of Mineral Resources

Potential Impact	Policies
Loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Mineral Resource Lands as classified by State as MRZ-2-areas containing significant mineral deposits. (ARC-7.2.2) Limit uses on Mineral Resource lands to mining and mining-related uses. (ARC-7.2.2) Allow facilities to be sited only where they will not preclude extraction of minerals necessary to sustain the economy of the state. (Public Safety 6.7.7)

The project does not propose any changes to General Plan/LCP land use designations or zoning for properties designated Mineral Resources. Additionally, none of the 23 parcels proposed for General Plan/LCP and/or zoning map amendments are designated Mineral Resources or zoned for mineral extraction, nor are they located to any existing quarry operations in the county. Therefore, with implementation of proposed policies and regulations, including SCCC Chapter 16.54 that regulates mining and reclamation of mined lands, the proposed project would not conflict with or cause rezoning of forest or timber lands, resulting in *no impact*.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required as a significant impact has not been identified.

4.2.3.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The proposed project accommodates cumulative growth in the unincorporated portions of the county. Other cumulative development and growth includes development accommodated by the general plans for the four incorporated cities within the county, specific known development projects, and growth and development at the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) campus. Cumulative development and growth is summarized on Table 4.0-1 in Section 4.0 of this EIR.

Most identified cumulative projects would not result in conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses as cumulative projects are not located within or adjacent to incorporated cities. In general, cumulative development and growth would tend to be located in developed urban areas, along existing transportation corridors, and within developed urban areas, rather than on agricultural lands. In addition, the current residential density limits for CA, A, and TP zones remain in place, further limiting residential growth and conversion of agricultural land. While growth under the 2021 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) would result in the conversion of approximately 2 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural uses, the 2021 LRDP EIR indicated that this 2-acre area is not a significant agricultural resource due to its limited acreage and water supply as well as its relative isolation compared to other agricultural lands in the region as determined through application of the LESA model (UCSC 2021). As indicated in the above analyses, the proposed project would not result in significant impacts to agricultural resources. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to potential conversion of Important Farmlands, conflicts with agricultural zoning or Williamson Act or other changes that could potentially lead to conversion of agricultural lands, would be less than significant.

Most cumulative projects identified in Table 4.0-1 would not result in conversion of forest land or impacts to mineral resources. Conversion of forest lands could occur with development as part of the UCSC LRDP (approximately 123 acres), resulting in a potentially significant cumulative impact on forest resources (UCSC 2021), even though there are substantial amounts of remaining forest lands throughout the county. For the purpose of this discussion, this could be considered a potentially significant cumulative impact. However, the proposed project would not result in direct or indirect conversion of forest lands as discussed in Impact FOR-1, and, thus the project's contribution to potentially significant cumulative impact to forest resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

Similarly, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative impacts to mineral resources. None of the identified cumulative development or growth would occur on lands containing important mineral resources. Therefore, the proposed project, in combination with the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in Santa Cruz County, would not result in cumulative impacts related to loss of availability of mineral resources.

4.2.4 References

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4.2.5 Figures

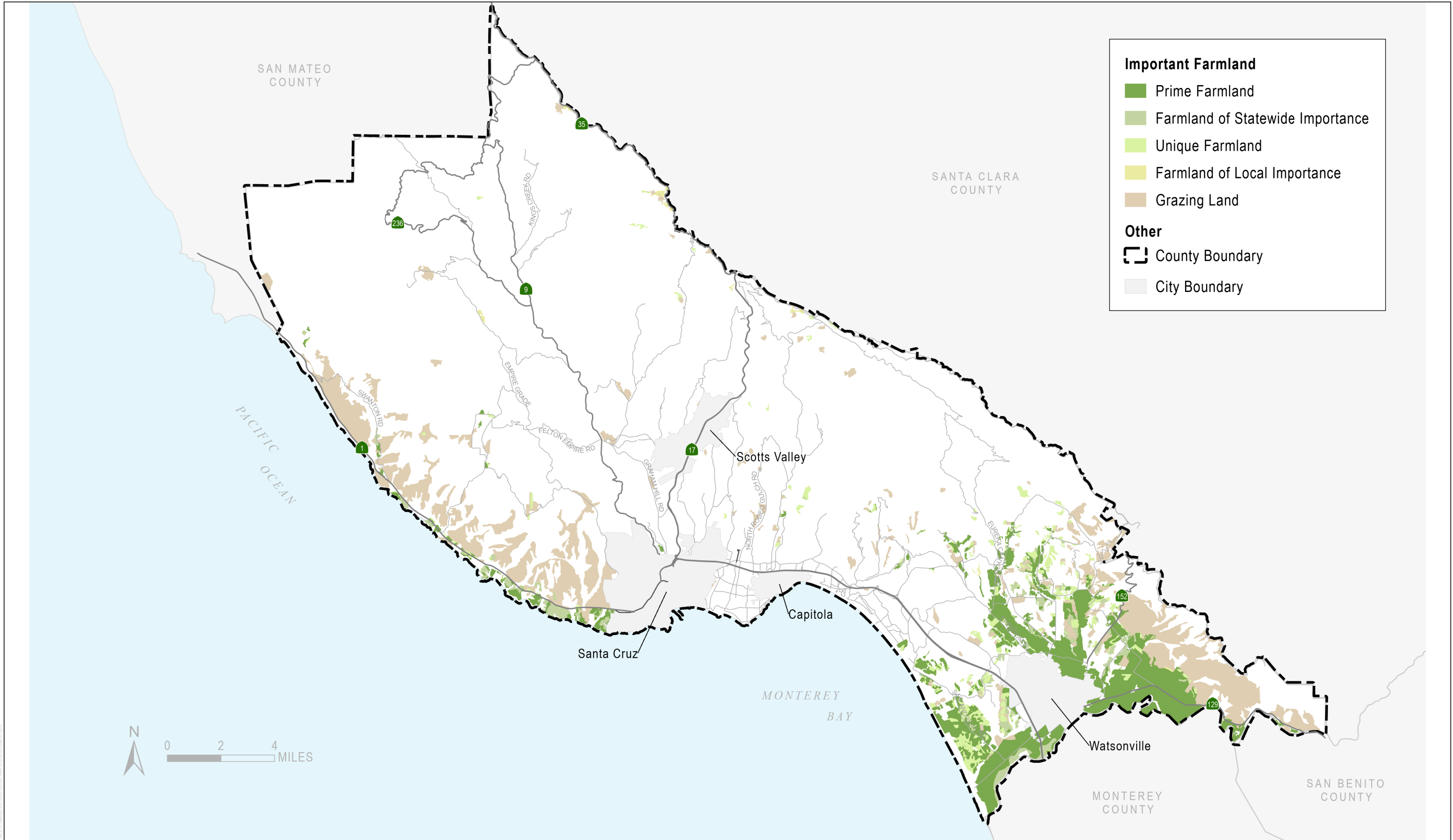
Figure 4.2-1. Santa Cruz County Important Farmland-State Farmland Mapping

Figure 4.2-2. County of Santa Cruz Agricultural Land Types

Figure 4.2-3. County of Santa Cruz Timber Resources

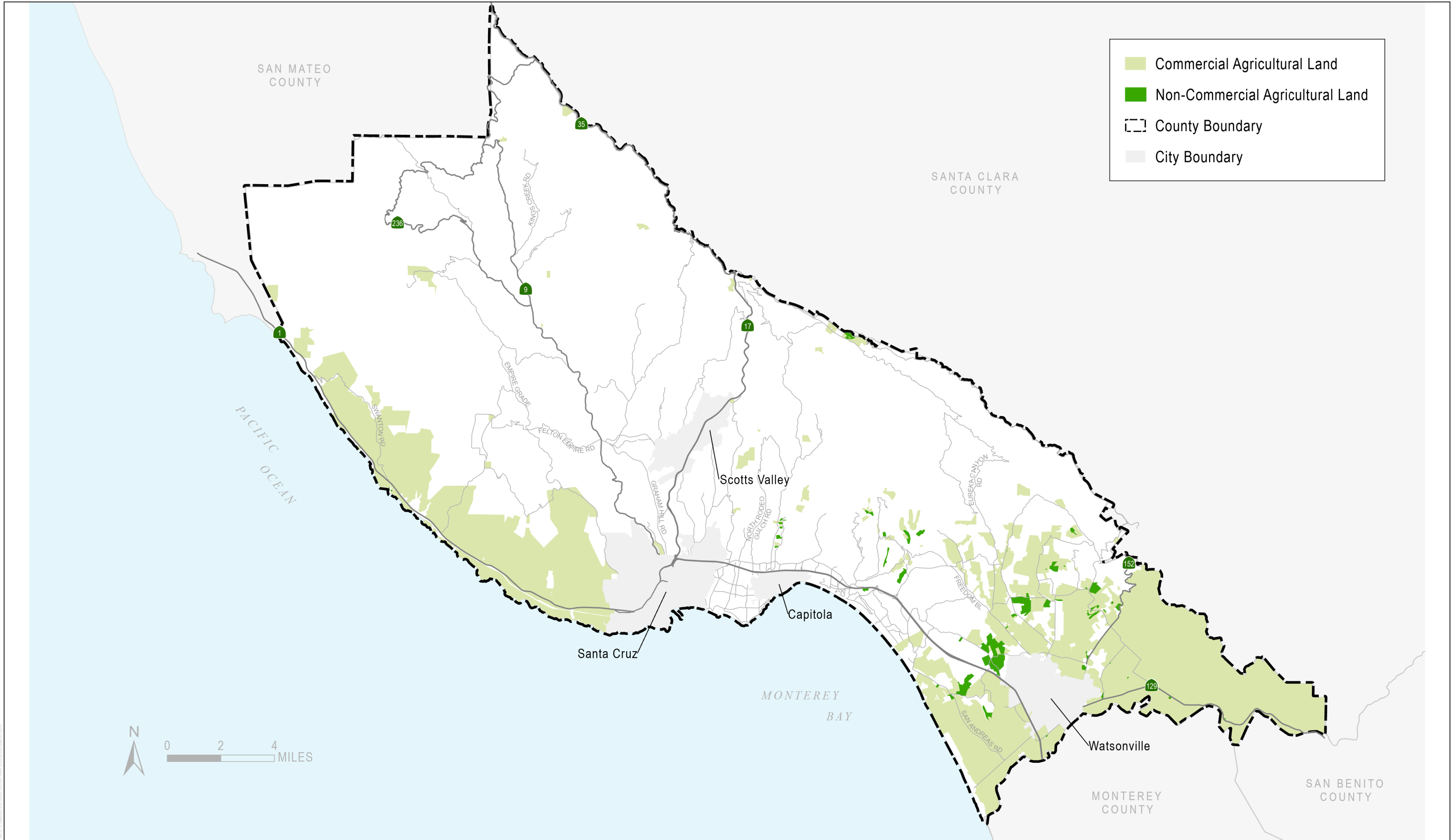
Figure 4.2-4. Santa Cruz County Mineral Resources

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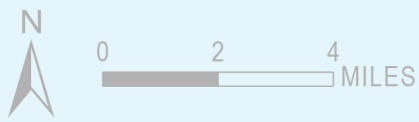


SOURCE: County of Santa Cruz 2021

FIGURE 4.2-1

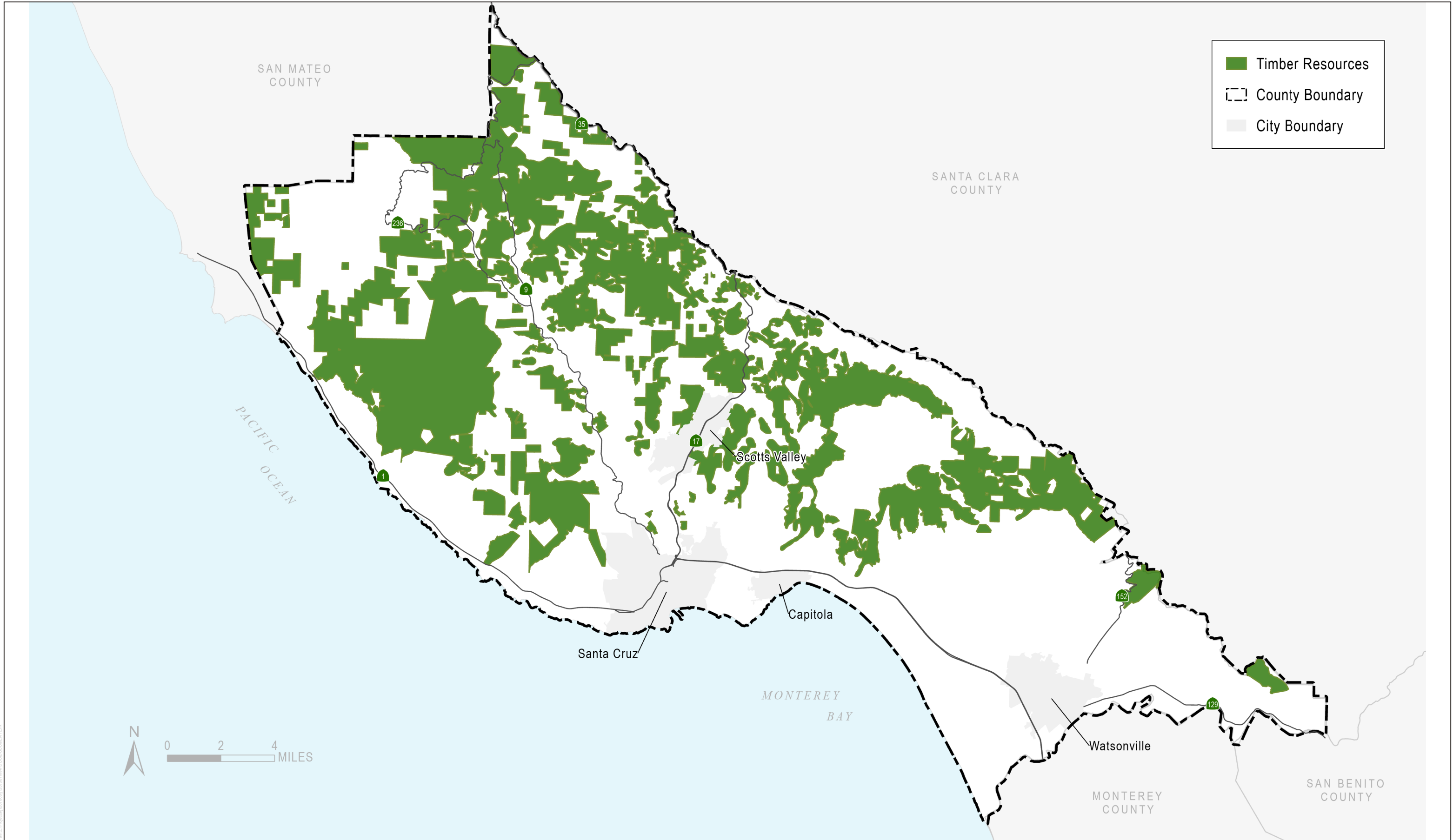


- Commercial Agricultural Land
- Non-Commercial Agricultural Land
- County Boundary
- City Boundary



SOURCE: County of Santa Cruz 2021

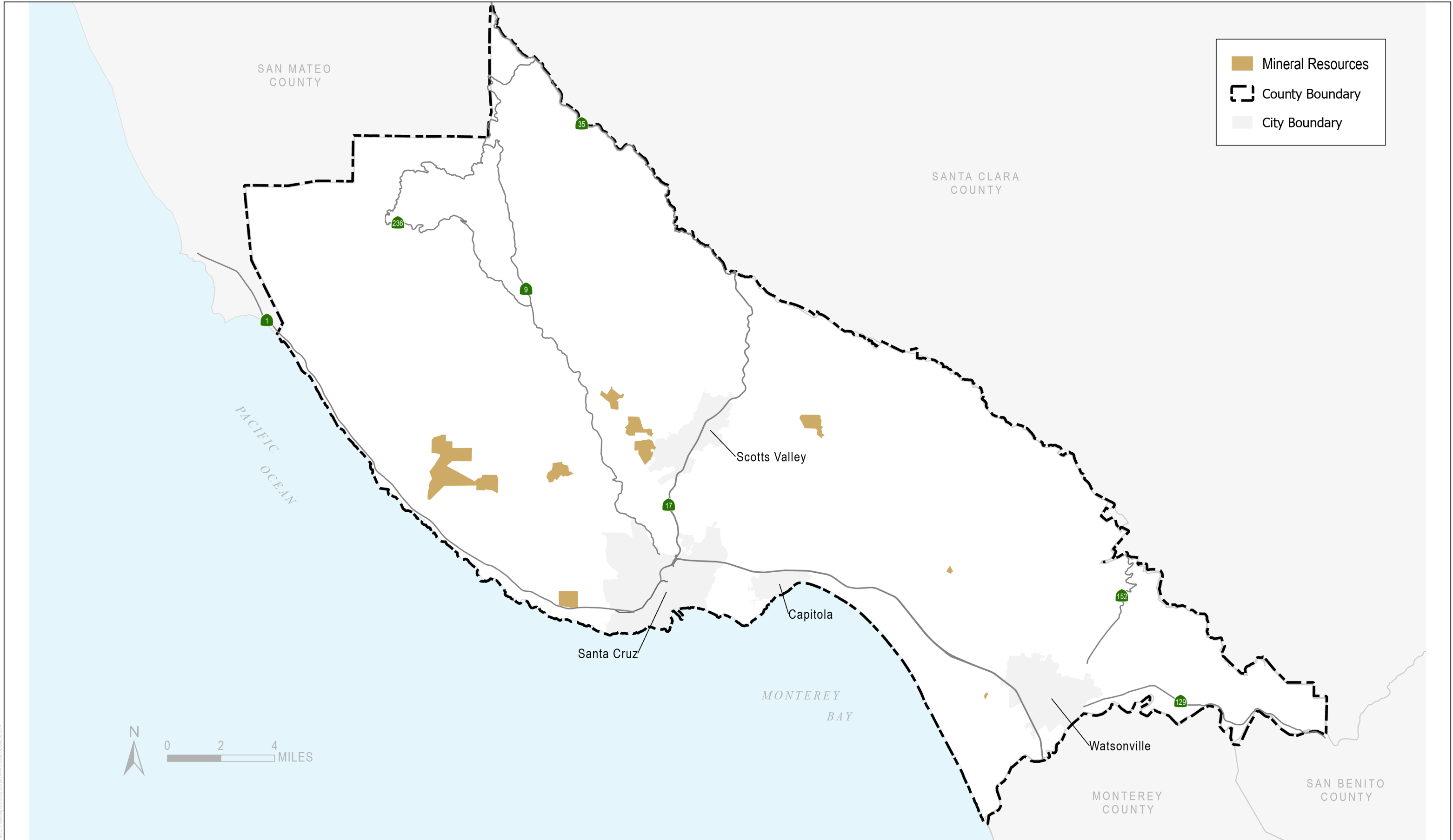
FIGURE 4.2-2



SOURCE: County of Santa Cruz 2021

FIGURE 4.2-3

County of Santa Cruz Timber Resources
 County of Santa Cruz Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update



SOURCE: County of Santa Cruz 2021

FIGURE 4.2-4