



November 20, 2017

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

AB 52 PROJECT NOTIFICATION

Project Title: Estero Trail Plan and Designation of Estero Trail Corridors and Associated Staging Areas project

Project Proponent: Sonoma County Regional Parks Department and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

Project Location: 17000 Valley Ford Cutoff/Highway 1, Valley Ford, Sonoma County

Environmental Impact Report: The Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD) previously prepared and circulated an initial study and a draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Estero Trail Easement: Designation of Trail Corridors and Associated Staging Areas project (proposed project). After reviewing the information disclosed by the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration document, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma directed staff to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the development of the proposed project. Transfer of the trail easement from the District to the County is pending. The County will be the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project. The District will be a Responsible Agency as it holds a Conservation Easement over the Bordessa property, and is the current holder of the Trail Easement for the purposes of designating the Trail Corridors. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) describes the proposed project that will be analyzed in the EIR and identifies areas of probable environmental effects of the project.

Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to provide input on the scope of the environmental analysis. If you are a responsible or trustee agency, we need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after the receipt of this notice.

This NOP also serves as notification to California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project, pursuant to Public Resources Code 21080.3.1 (Assembly Bill 52). If your tribe wishes to consult on this project, please note you have 30 days to request consultation.

Written Comments:

Please submit written comments to any of the below:

Email: Rich.Stabler@sonoma-county.org

Fax: (707) 565-1103

Regular Mail: PRMD, Attn: Rich Stabler, 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Public Scoping Meeting: The County will hold a scoping meeting to provide an opportunity for agency staff and interested members of the public to submit comments, either written or verbal, on the scope of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday, **December 13, 2017 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** at the Valley Ford School House located at 14355 School Rd, Valley Ford, CA. The scoping meeting will have an “open house” format, so participants can attend at any point during this two-hour window. Participants arriving after 6:00 p.m. will not miss any meeting content. Written comments regarding relevant issues may be submitted at the meeting.

For questions regarding this notice, please contact Rich Stabler, Senior Environmental Specialist, at (707) 565-8352 or the email address above.

Project Background:

In 2012, the District purchased a conservation easement (Conservation Easement) and trail easement (Trail Easement) over property owned by Alfred and Joseph Bordessa (Bordessa Ranch) located on Valley Ford Cutoff, west of the town of Valley Ford (see Figure 1, Regional Map). The purpose of the Conservation Easement is to preserve and protect the conservation values of the property, including natural resources, habitat connectivity, open space and scenic views, agricultural resources, and recreation and education. The purpose of the Trail Easement is to ensure that trail corridors and associated staging areas are established and made available to the public in perpetuity for low-intensity public outdoor recreational and educational purposes consistent with the Conservation Easement. The goals of the Conservation Easement take precedence over the Trail Easement.

The District is proposing to designate trail corridors and associated staging areas pursuant to the Trail Easement and consistent with the Conservation Easement. Under the terms of the Trail Easement, the District must designate and survey the precise locations of two 50-foot-wide pedestrian-only trail corridors, cumulatively not to exceed 5 miles in length, and two staging areas, not to exceed 1.5 acres in total combined area. The District will subsequently transfer the Trail Easement to the County, who is developing the Estero Trail Plan. The County, acting through Regional Parks, is acting as the lead agency for purposes of environmental review under CEQA. The District has contracted with PRMD to assist in the environmental review process and PRMD prepared and circulated an initial study and MND in October 2016. Based on information disclosed in the MND, District and County staff have determined that an EIR is now necessary to more fully characterize and evaluate potential impacts of the complete Project, including both District designation of the trail corridor and County approval of the Estero Trail Plan.

Project Location:

The proposed project is located on the 495-acre Bordessa Ranch property, at 17000 Valley Ford Cutoff, in unincorporated Sonoma County, west of the town of Valley Ford (Highway 1) (Figure 1). The Bordessa Ranch is bordered by State Highway 1 on the north and extends to the Estero Americano on its south, encompassing rolling hills and two prominent knolls (see Figure 2, Site Location). Existing adjacent land uses are mostly rural agricultural. Site elevations range from sea level at the Estero to about 400 feet at the highest knoll on the northwestern corner of the site.

Proposed Project:

The Trail Easement held by the District commits the District to designate two 50-foot-wide pedestrian-only trail corridors, up to a cumulative maximum of 5 miles in length, and two associated staging areas, not to exceed 1.5 acres in size in total combined area, to provide for low-intensity public outdoor recreational and educational uses on the property consistent with the underlying Conservation Easement. The trail corridors are intended to provide public access from Highway 1 to scenic vista points and possible limited public access to the Estero Americano. The purpose of this project is to designate the two trail corridors: West Trail Corridor – 2.01 miles and East Trail Corridor – not exceeding 2.75 miles and two associated staging areas (Figure 3, Proposed Trail Locations). The EIR will evaluate the construction, operation and future maintenance of the trails and staging areas, as well as the access road, access bridge(s), and access gate.

The proposed project would establish two pedestrian-only trail corridors with associated staging areas (trailheads/parking lots) that would allow for low-intensity public access to pursue outdoor, recreational, and educational uses. As outlined in the Trail Easement, future uses may include hiking, nature study, bird watching, sightseeing, picnicking, outdoor education, docent-led tours, scientific research and observation, and other similar uses. Future uses may also include limited, seasonal walk-in access to the Estero for pedestrians and hand-carried, non-motorized boats, such as kayaks and canoes, if and to the extent the District determines that such access is compatible with sensitive resources associated with the Estero and the property. The District may place limitations on the nature, hours, and season of public access to the access road, bridge, and access gate, as well as the staging areas and trail corridors, as it deems appropriate for natural resources protection.

The anticipated trail system would be the principal means for providing public access to the property and the Estero. Within the two trail corridors, the trails would be constructed for pedestrian use only (no dogs, bikes, or equestrians would be allowed) and are anticipated to be approximately 5-feet wide; constructed of compacted native material or other permeable surface; and include wet crossings or footbridges at ephemeral stream crossings. Trail markers, posts, signs, and benches, would be placed along the trail to assist users. The existing main access road, access gate, and access bridge may be improved or replaced in the same or similar locations. Two staging areas of 1.5 acres in total combined area would be designated to accommodate parking for trail users. One staging area would be located to the north near Highway 1, and the other would be located south of the existing barn and Agricultural Building. The future development of the staging areas would likely include relocation and extension of the existing access road to both staging areas. The access road to the staging areas would provide operations, maintenance, emergency, and public access to the trail system. Staging area development would include a permeable surface, with accessible parking, and may also include the following features: portable restroom facilities, bicycle parking, picnic tables, benches, trash

& recycle containers, and operations signage. Potable water would not be provided. It is assumed that normal trail operating hours for public use would be sunrise to sunset seven days a week, and that access to the Estero for pedestrians, kayaks, and canoes would be allowed.

The District proposes to transfer the Trail Easement to the County for construction, future operation, and maintenance of the trail and staging areas. The County's Regional Parks Department has received grant funds from the Coastal Conservancy and additional funding from the District towards completion of the Estero Trail Plan.

Requested Entitlements:

The County is exempt from the Sonoma County Zoning Code, so no local entitlements are necessary to construct the trail. However, the following Responsible Agencies may be required to use this EIR to authorize construction or to issue permits for the project.

- California Coastal Commission – construction of improvements in the coastal zone
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Take of any federally listed species
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife – Take of any state-listed species

Project Alternatives:

The EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives including the required No Project Alternative and could include the following project alternatives:

- Shorter trail corridors/or elimination of one of the trails
- Different trail management (i.e., only docent led tours)
- Elimination of specific recreation activities

Potential Environmental Effect Areas:

The EIR will describe the reasonably foreseeable and potentially significant adverse effects of the proposed project (both direct and indirect). The EIR also will evaluate the cumulative impacts of the project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The County anticipates that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts in the following topic areas, which will be further evaluated in the EIR.

Aesthetics/Visual	Hydrology and Water Quality
Agriculture Resources	Land Use and Planning
Air Quality	Noise
Biological Resources	Transportation and Traffic
Cultural Resources	Public Services and Safety
Geology and Soils	Cumulative Effects
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Growth Inducing Effects

As environmental documentation for this project is completed, it will be available for review at the County's PRMD offices located at 2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, and online at: <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Permit-and-Resource-Management/>.



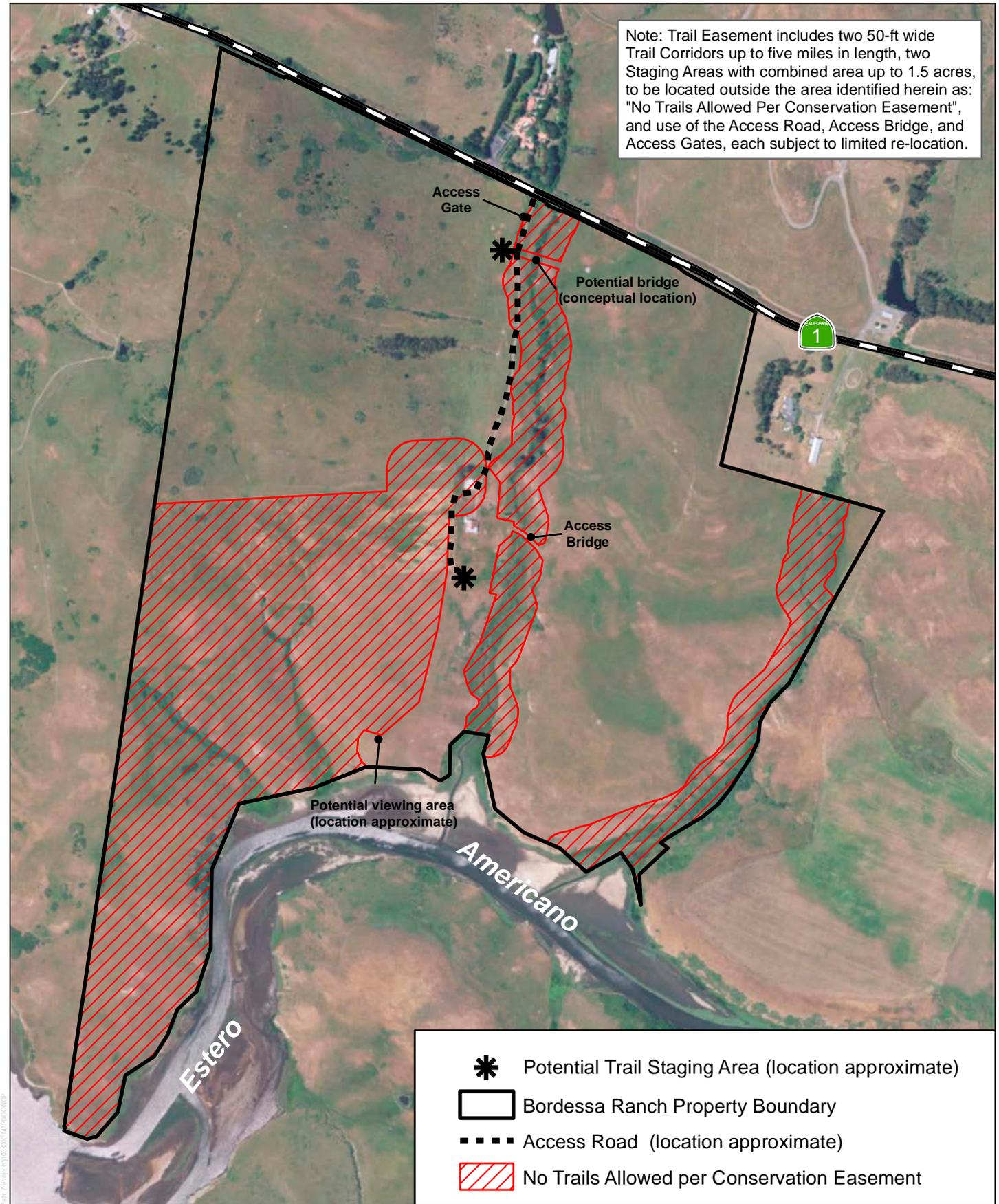
SOURCE: ArcGIS Online Basemap USGS (National Map)

FIGURE 1

Regional Map

Bordessa Ranch - Estero Trail



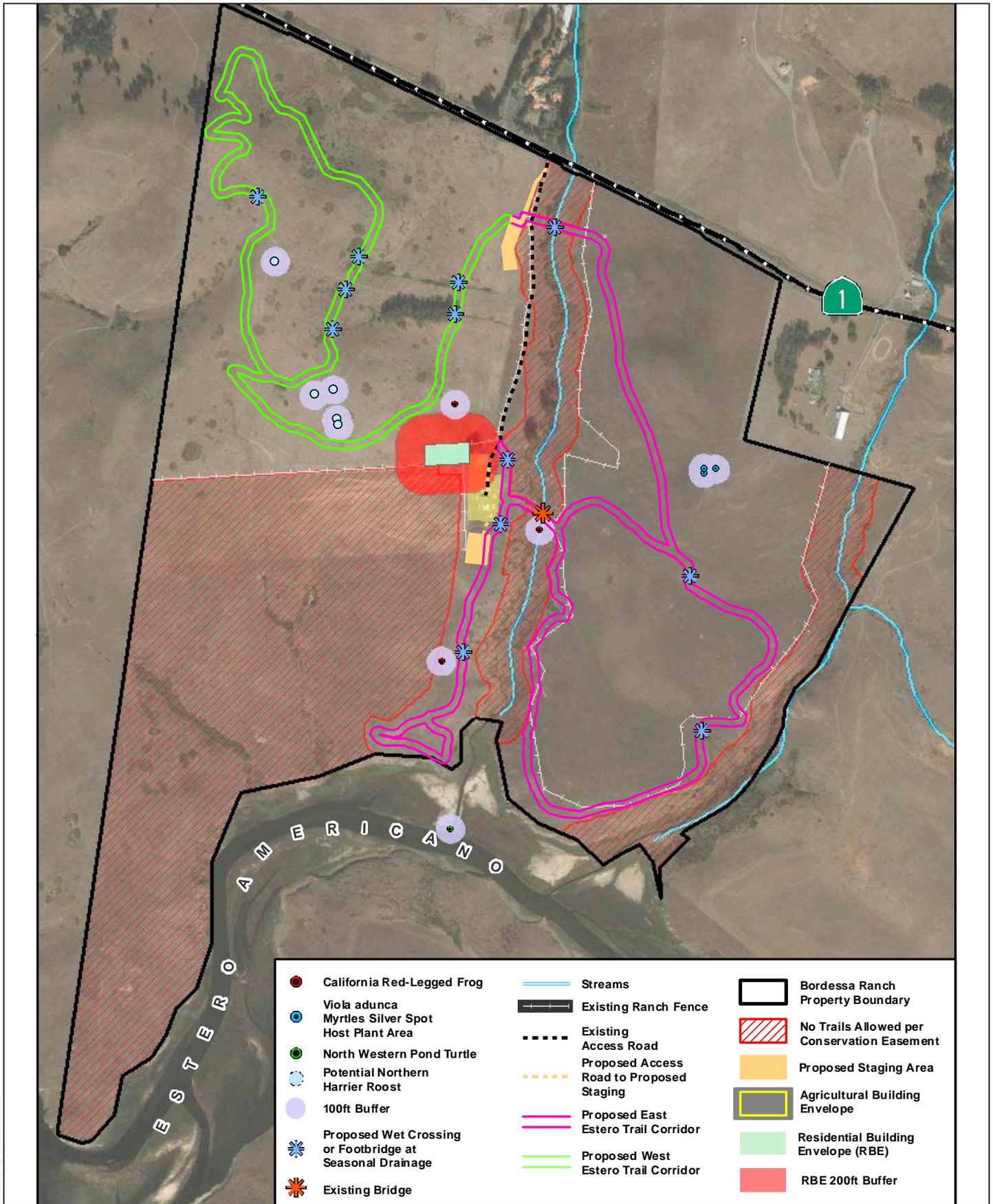


SOURCE: Sonoma County (2017)

FIGURE 2

Site Location

Bordessa Ranch - Estero Trail



SOURCE: Sonoma County (2017)

FIGURE 3

Proposed Trail Locations

Bordessa Ranch - Estero Trail