



The Northern Santa Barbara County Interim California Coastal Trail Study

Santa Barbara
County Association
of Governments

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Santa Barbara County Trails Council

with

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Santa Barbara County Association of Governments

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The Northern Santa Barbara County Interim California Coastal Trail Study

What Is the Interim Coastal Trail Study?

This study's primary objective is to identify a trail alignment or braided alignments for a continuous California Coastal Trail through Northern Santa Barbara County. The study area is from the northern county border at the City of Guadalupe to the beach at Gaviota State Park.

Much of the Santa Barbara Coastline in the North County region is not accessible primarily due to the location of Vandenberg Air Force Base. This study looked at options for an interim or secondary coastal trail until the coastline between the City of Guadalupe and Gaviota State Park is accessible by the public.

The proposed alignment is located primarily within road corridor rights of way and on public land where available but avoids alignments across private land.

This document is strictly informational and advisory. The purpose of this study is to inform a future decision by elected officials in the selection of a trail alignment, assuming the development of a designated route or trail moves forward.

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North County Trail Riders

Introduction

CHAPTER **1**

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1.1 Purpose and Intent

The purpose of the Northern Santa Barbara County Interim Coastal Trail Study (Trail Study) is to identify a preferred interim route for the California Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail) through northern Santa Barbara County (North County). The Trail Study also identifies connections to the coast and other existing recreational resources between the Gaviota State Park and the terminus of the Coastal Trail at the northern County border at the Santa Maria River near the City of Guadalupe. The Trail Study identifies opportunities and constraints for the completion and future enhancement of the Coastal Trail and connections to the coast. The Trail Study analyzes current conditions, incorporates input from the general public and key stakeholders such as land management agencies to fully disclose existing and future trail opportunities, and identify recommended multi-use trail routes and improvements that will create a healthier and more vibrant County.

In preparation for this Trail Study, the Santa Barbara County Trails Council (Trails Council) performed eight days of field surveys of potential on-road route alignments and off-road trail segments and to identify potential constraints in planning a potential Coastal Trail alignment. The Trails Council researched constraints and opportunities and held three workshops to gather input on access, potential routes, and recreational issues of public concern within the North County. The Trail Study delineates a feasible, primarily on-road *Backbone* Route for the Coastal Trail through the North County, multiple shorter off-road routes, and coastal access connection opportunities as recreational resources of state and national importance.



Cuarta Beach at Hollister Ranch

Over the years, many constraints within the North County (e.g., private and federal land ownership, sensitivity of habitat) have resulted in restrictions in access to many high-value coastal areas. For instance, Hollister Ranch occupies approximately 8.5-miles of the North County coast and public access is currently prohibited. Today, access to coastal resources in the North County is limited to only a fraction (approximately 13-percent) of the 64-miles of coastline.



1.2 Coastal Trail Legislation and Policies

The Coastal Act was enacted in 1976 by the State Legislature to provide long-term protection of California's 1,100-mile coastline for the benefit of current and future generations. Protection and enhancement of public access to and along the coast is a key component of the California Coastal Act and Santa Barbara County's 1982 Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP). The Coastal Act contains policies to maximize appropriate shoreline public access and recreation, including provisions for the protection and enhancement of existing access points and for the creation of the Coastal Trail. The California State Coastal Conservancy's *Completing the California Coastal Trail* provides a strategic blueprint for the alignment, design, and implementation of the Coastal Trail. The County's CLUP policies and recommendations expand on and implement the California Coastal Act goal of maximizing opportunities for public access and recreation. The California Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy, California Department of Parks and Recreation, local governments, and non-profit organizations, such as the Trails Council, have all played a role and will continue to do so in assuring this public access and use.

1.3 Implementation of the Coastal Trail

Formal planning for the Coastal Trail was initiated in the Coastal Act of 1976, which required local jurisdictions to identify an alignment for the Coastal Trail in their CLUPs and Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). Santa Barbara County's 1982 CLUP incorporated the Coastal Trail into the County's Parks, Recreation, and Trails Map, which depicts the Gaviota Coastal Trail along the shoreline of the Gaviota Coast. The alignment for existing and proposed portions of the Gaviota Coastal Trail was later updated by the

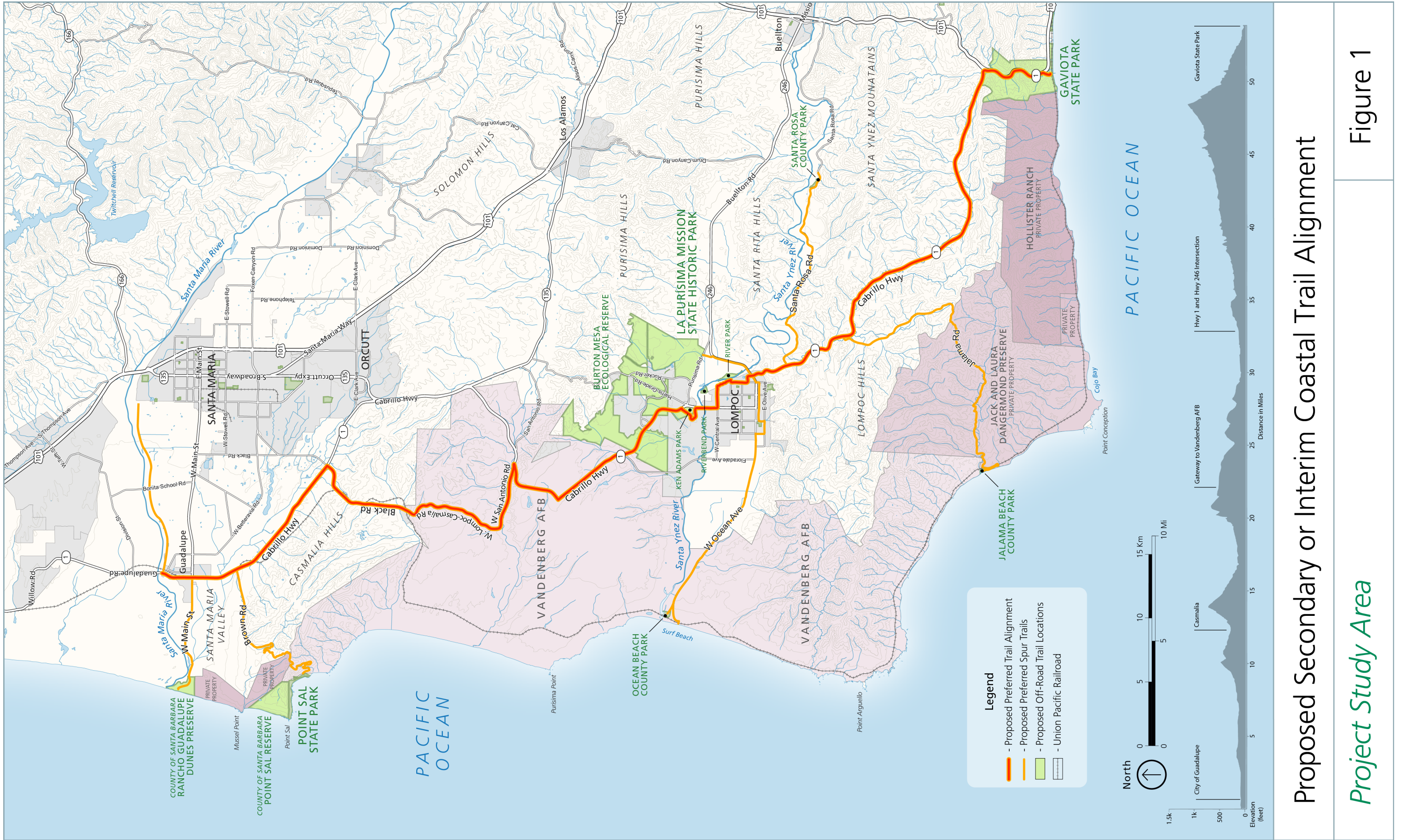


Hollister Ranch occupies 8.5-miles of shoreline of North County Coast and land based public access to beaches is currently prohibited. Assembly Bill 1680, written by Assemblymember Monique Limón, directs the California Coastal Commission, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Lands Commission, and the Coastal Conservancy to update the Hollister Ranch Public Access Program and truly enforce the law. Hollister Ranch is required to provide public pedestrian access to the beach by April 2022.

County in its 2016 Gaviota Coast Plan, which was adopted by the California Coastal Commission in November 2018.

The State defines the Coastal Trail as: "A continuous public right-of-way along the California coastline; a trail designed to foster appreciation and stewardship of scenic and natural resources of the coast..." In 2003, at the direction of the State Legislature (Senate Bill 908), the Coastal Conservancy published *Completing the California Coastal Trail*, which provides a strategic blueprint for the alignment, design, and implementation of the Coastal Trail (Coastal Conservancy 2003). The State has identified the following set of objectives for the Coastal Trail Project:

1. Provide a continuous trail as close to the ocean as possible, with connections to the shoreline ("vertical access") at appropriate intervals and sufficient transportation access to encourage public use.
2. Foster cooperation between State, local, and federal public agencies in the planning, design, signage, and implementation of the Coastal Trail.
3. Increase public awareness of the costs and benefits associated with completion of the Coastal Trail.
4. Assure that the location and design of the Coastal Trail is consistent with the policies of the California Coastal



Proposed Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail Alignment

Project Study Area

Figure 1



The interim Coastal Trail alignment would be primarily an on-road bike trail such as this segment of Black Road (pictured left) due to restrictions associated with private property ownership and Vandenberg Air Force Base; however, important scenic off-road trail opportunities exist at Guadalupe Dunes County Park and Point Sal (pictured right) near Santa Maria, the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, La Purisima State Park and Jalama Beach County Park near Lompoc and at Gaviota State Park. Cyclist Photo: Frank Cowan, Lompoc Record 2019. Point Sal Photo: Chad Hinkle

Act and local coastal programs, and is respectful of the rights of private landowners.

- 5. Design the Coastal Trail to provide a valuable experience for the users by protecting the natural environment and cultural resources while providing public access to beaches, scenic vistas, wildlife viewing areas, recreation and interpretive facilities, and other points of interest.
- 6. Create linkages to other trail systems (e.g., Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve) and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers.

This Trail Study adheres to the direction provided by Proposition 20, the 1972 voter approved Coastal Zone Conservation Act that created the Coastal Commission and the basis for the 1976 State Coastal Act, 2002 State Recreational Trails Plan, Coastal Conservancy's Completing the California Coastal Trail, the County's CLUP, and the County's 2016 Gaviota Coast Plan with regard to the location of the Gaviota Coastal Trail and new coastal access points.

The Interim California Coastal Trail Alignment Identification (Section 4.0) of this study is intended to be consistent with the guidelines and principles outlined by the Coastal Conservancy and accomplishes statewide objectives for

the Coastal Trail, such as separation from motor traffic to the extent feasible and proximity to the Pacific Ocean where possible. Below is a list of those guidelines and policies most relevant to completing the Coastal Trail and protecting coastal access.

Coastal Conservancy Guidelines for Completing the Coastal Trail

Alignment

"Provide a continuous trail as close to the ocean as possible with connections to the shoreline at appropriate intervals and sufficient transportation access to encourage public use" (Objective 1).

"Wherever feasible, the Coastal Trail should be within the sight, sound, or at least the scent of the sea. The traveler should have a persisting awareness of the Pacific Ocean. It is the presence of the ocean that distinguishes the seaside trail from other visitor destinations."

"The Coastal Trail should be continuous and separated from motor traffic."

Design

- *"Design the California Coastal Trail to provide a valuable experience for the user by protecting the natural environment and cultural resources while providing public access to beaches, scenic vistas, wildlife, viewing areas, recreation*



or interpretive facilities, and other points of interest" (Objective 5).

Implementation

- *"Assure the location and design of the Coastal Trail is consistent with the policies of the California Coastal Act and local coastal programs, and is respectful of the rights of private landowners."* (Objective 4).

Key Policies for the Protection and Provision of Coastal Public Access

1972 Proposition 20

- Requires that *"a hiking, bicycle, and equestrian trail shall be established along or near the coast" and that "ideally the trails system should be continuous and located near the shoreline."*

1976 California Coastal Act (Pub. Resources Code § 30000 et seq.)

- **Section 30210** - In carrying out the requirement of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.
- **Section 30211** – Development shall not interfere with the public's right of access to the sea where acquired through use or legislative authorization [...]
- **Section 30212.4** – Wherever appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area.
- **Section 30221** – Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area.

1982 County of Santa Barbara LCP (Updated 2009)

- **Policy 7-18** – Expanded opportunities for access and recreation shall be provided in the Gaviota Coast planning area.
- **Policy 7-25** – Easements for trails shall be required as a condition of project approval for that portion of the trail crossing the parcel upon which the project is proposed.

2002 California Recreational Trails Plan

- Describes the Coastal Trail as a hiking, biking, and equestrian trail corridor *"...from Oregon to Mexico within the sights and sounds of the Pacific Ocean."*



"There are currently no hiking, biking, or riding trails proposed to the North County coastal zone that would increase access to remote coastal areas between Gaviota and Guadalupe... A trail system in this area would increase opportunities for public access and enjoyment of this relatively undeveloped portion of coastline"

—Santa Barbara County 1982 Coastal Land Use



1.4 Previous Trail and Other Relevant Plans and Studies

There has been no previous comprehensive study of potential routes for the Coastal Trail through the North County. This Trail Study utilizes and builds upon Coastal Trail and recreation planning studies, management plans, environmental review for proposed trail corridors and improvements within the North County. A few key studies and planning documents utilized in this Study include the following. Additional studies and planning documents existing for places of recreation within the North County, such as La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and the Gaviota State Park General Plans; however, these studies were not available or could not be accessed and utilized for this Trail Study.

Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (1981)

Adopted by the California Coastal Commission in 1982, the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program aimed to establish a method to provide public coastal access within the 14,500-acre subdivision along the 8.5-miles of the Gaviota Coast that is Hollister Ranch. The program's goal was to achieve public coastal access through phased implementation of the recommendations provided in a *Report of the Environmental Assessment Panel* prepared for the plan in 1982. To date, the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program has not been implemented, and public access to this section of coastal remains prohibited in 2020.

Preliminary Jalama Beach Master Plan (1999)

Jalama Beach County Park is a park owned and managed by the County of Santa Barbara, and managed by the County's Community Services Department, Parks Division. The park is one of only four coastal access points in the North County shoreline, and provides the only public coastal overnight accommodations and complete recreational opportunities along



Jalama Beach County Park

the nearly 64-miles of coastline. The Preliminary Jalama Beach Master Plan, though never officially adopted, sought to expand the park to gain greater public access to the coastline and improve the facilities provided at the park.

Gaviota Coast Plan (2016)

The Gaviota Coast Plan designates and regulates land use along the Gaviota Coast, including more than 20 percent of the North County shoreline, extending west and north from Gaviota State Park for more than 15-miles around Point Conception to Jalama Beach County Park and Vandenberg Air Force Base. The Gaviota Coast Plan encompasses the shorelines of both Hollister Ranch and The Nature Conservancy's Dangermond Preserve, both of which currently prohibit public access. The Gaviota Coast Plan Trail Map (Figure 4-4) depict a continuous near-shore Coastal Trail of approximately 21-miles in length through Hollister Ranch and the Dangermond Reserve. A relevant policy notes that the County should "acquire easements for the California Coastal Trail from the eastern end of Hollister Ranch to Jalama Beach County Park".

SBCAG Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2015)

This plan was prepared by SBCAG, the regional transportation planning agency for the County to meet the requirements of the California Transportation Commission's 2014 Active Transportation Program



Guidelines. The plan provides an overview of the existing conditions as they relate to bicycle and pedestrian modes in the region, highlighting current and future needs and improvements. The plan primarily addresses inland bicycle and pedestrian routes and does not evaluate the consistency with the policies for implementation of the Coastal Trail.

Land Management Plan for the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve (2007)

The Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve is an area of over 5,300 acres north of the City of Lompoc managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as an important ecological reserve protecting the sensitive Burton Mesa Chaparral. The Burton Mesa Chaparral is a unique form of chaparral that is restricted to specific sandy soils and geologic formation providing habitat for a number of sensitive and endemic plant species that are highly restricted in their distribution. In 2007, CDFW prepared the management plan to achieve CDFW's mission of protecting and enhancing wilderness areas, identify appropriate public use of the reserve, take inventory of sensitive species occurring within the reserve, outline and im-

plement management goals, and describe potential and actual environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation that may occur during management. The management plan includes a "Trail Plan" component that outlines the management and maintenance of the 52.3-miles of existing trails within the ecological reserve, 28.5-miles of which are proposed to remain open and accessible to the public. Trail use is restricted to pedestrians only, with mountain bikes, equestrian and dog walkers, a significant portion of the trail using public, prohibited.

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park Master Plan (1999)

The Final Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park Master Plan was prepared in 1999 to propose improvements to the County park that would improve visitor facilities and amenities while also protecting the natural habitat. The Master Plan was prepared by both the County and The Nature Conservancy and was informed by a community assessment study prepared by The Nature Conservancy in 1995 and a Rancho Guadalupe County Park Site Analysis and Feasibility Study prepared by the County in 1997. The



Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park has been the subject of many planning, management, and restoration studies due to its significance as one of the North County's few coastal access points, historic sand mining activities, and significant biological value.



Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park

community assessment study provided information on demographics, perceptions, interests, and needs of existing and future visitors of the park. In addition, the Master Plan provides an overview of the biological resources present within the park. The Master Plan was never fully adopted, and many of the proposed improvements have not been implemented. Access restrictions within the park are severe with much of the park closed most of the year due to endangered species protection, although access to and along the shoreline is generally available.

Draft Point Sal Reserve Management Plan (1991)

In 1991, Storrer and Semonsen, under the guidance of the Point Sal Steering Committee, prepared the draft Point Sal Reserve Management Plan (draft Management Plan) which focused on the 1,103 acres (four publicly owned parcels and three privately owned parcels) of undeveloped open space, public access, natural resources and constraints, including biological and cultural resources, geologic and hydrologic resources, and land ownership, within the proposed Point Sal Reserve Management Area. The draft Management Plan addressed public recreation and access, including trail maps with up to 8-miles of proposed public trails to and along the shoreline. This plan also proposes access restriction, with both bikes and equestrians banned from the area, although much of the trail system consists of dirt roads.

Santa Barbara County Coastal Trails System – Mission to Mission Trails for Bikes, Hikers, and Equestrians (1973)

Prepared by the Santa Barbara County Trails Council in 1973, the *Santa Barbara County Coastal Trails System - Mission to Mission Trails for Bikers, Hikers, and Equestrians* provides a summary of conceptual trail routes in the 1969 Santa Barbara County General Plan. The routes were envisioned and planned as a triple-use trail system connecting the Santa Barbara, Santa Ines, and La Purisima Missions. Several goals of the proposed trail system were to: establish a link in the California Pacific Coast Trail System; provide for the special needs of hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians in the design of trails; establish sites for overnight, day use, and environmental observation at appropriate locations; maximize recreational and wilderness opportunities; and protect the natural and historic environment.

Pending Plans

In addition to older studies and plans, several plans or studies are pending regarding trail or coastal access improvements.

Jack and Laura Dangermond Integrated Resources Management Plan

In 2020, the Nature Conservancy published the Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve Integrated Resources Management Plan for the nearly 8-miles of shoreline along the 24,000-acre Dangermond Preserve located around Point Conception. This management plan addresses resource protection, habitat restoration and public access. It is not clear how the Nature Conservancy will address the Coastal Trail or the degree to which public access will be permitted, including the existing offer to the public to establish a 2.3-mile-long trail within the Gerber Fee Property (Assessor's Parcel No. 083-600 1 through 9 and 12), which is located primarily along Cojo Bay Road at Point Conception, as the plan includes no direct policies for allowing public access along this important stretch of coastline. At this time, the plan includes goals and policies only



The Nature Conservancy has begun preliminary planning for the 24,000-acre Dangermond Preserve that includes improved public access to coastal resources within the reserve.

for the allowance of access to the Dangermond Preserve for K-12, community education programs, and research scientists.

Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program (HRCAP)

Four California state agencies – the Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, and the State Lands Commission have committed their staff and resources to collaborate to develop a contemporary Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program that is informed by broad and comprehensive public outreach and engagement; reflects the values of current and future generations of all Californians; respects the unique and treasured resources, attributes and opportunities of the Hollister Ranch coastline; and maintains consistency with the laws and policies of the State. The agencies are collaborating with community stakeholders to implement AB 1680. Santa Barbara Assemblywoman Monique Limón, wrote the legislation, which requires a plan for public access over land to be implemented by April 1, 2022.

Santa Barbara Countywide Recreation Master Plan

This master plan is currently under preparation and a public draft will be released in late 2020 or early 2021. This plan will address all types of recreational facilities, including trails, campgrounds and coastal access. The Plan will address improved coastal access and new

segments of the Coastal Trail at locations such as the County's Point Sal Reserve, Jalama Beach County Park, Guadalupe Dunes County Park and may also investigate coastal access improvements at Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park, as well as other locations along the North County shoreline.

1.5 Coastal Trail Statewide Status

The Coastal Trail is envisioned as a complete, through hiking trail approximately 1,300-miles in length and extending from Oregon to Mexico that will connect the entire coast of California. Different segments of the Coastal Trail have been completed throughout the State; however, many gaps still exist which present a challenge to achieving the goal of providing a link along California's coast through a publicly accessible trail system. Santa Barbara County, which consists of nearly 2,700 square miles of land with over 110-miles of coastline, represents one such challenge for achieving this goal. The *Completing the California Coastal Trail* in 2003 estimated that approximately 88-miles of improvements were needed to complete the Coastal Trail through Santa Barbara County (Table 1), the majority of which is located in the North County. Since 2003, County State, Federal, and local agencies have made small steps in completing sections of the Coastal Trail in Santa Barbara County.

Table 1. Improvements Needed to Complete Approximately 88-miles of Coastal Trail

Improvements	Incomplete Miles	Miles Completed
Highway Corridor	37	0
Acquisition/Construction on Private Lands	31	0
Construction on Private Lands	3	0
Current Trail Totals	71	17

Source: Coastal Conservancy 2003



1.6 Status of North County Coastal Trail and Access

Locally, there has been progress in completing Coastal Trail segments in southern Santa Barbara County. However, provision of basic coastal access and completing any segments of the Coastal Trail through the North County that is consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's guidelines has remained unfulfilled. This is due to large expanses of government owned or private land where public access is limited or prohibited, including Vandenberg Air Force Base, the Nature Conservancy's newly acquired Dangermond Preserve and Hollister Ranch that line almost the entire 64-mile-long North County coastline. Endangered species protection has also severely restricted public access to and along the shoreline at Ocean Beach County Park in the Lompoc Valley and Guadalupe Dunes County Park in the Santa Maria Valley. Coastal access to existing trails on County and State Park lands at Point Sal is also limited due to damage or destruction of historic access roads and trails that cross both private land and VAFB, while Jalama Beach County Park is often overcrowded, sometimes limiting full public access at this location.

Because of these combination of factors, public access to and along the North County shoreline has become substantially more limited than that available upon enactment of the Coastal Act in 1976 or adoption of the Coastal Conservancy's 2003 *Completing the California Coastal Trail*. Many management plans completed for public lands over the last 40 years emphasize resource protection and access restrictions over promoting public access to and along the shoreline, often banning access for extended periods or excluding many user groups such as mountain bikers, equestrians or dog walkers.

As a result of this combination of factors, the Coastal Trail does not exist anywhere in North County. A planned segment of more than 15-miles in length identified in the Gaviota Coast Plan extends from Gaviota State Park west and through Hollister Ranch and then west and north through the Dangermond Preserve terminating at Jalama Beach County Park. This lack of an open Coastal Trail along 64-miles of shoreline and limited and often restricted access disenfranchises the public's right to access *"to and along the coast"* and causing a significant missing gap in the Coastal Trail between Gaviota State Beach and the San Luis Obispo County line. This causes North County residents to drive long distances to access segments of the Coastal Trail or the beach. The lack of a plan for



A plan to build a half-mile boardwalk across the sand dunes from Surf Beach to Ocean Beach is being developed by Vandenberg Air Force Base



completing the Coastal Trail and accessing the coast impedes coordinated planning with local, State, and Federal agencies, and trail advocacy groups, which interferes with North County public use and enjoyment of the Coastal Trail and access to and along the shoreline. In fact, more than 200,000 North County residents, many from disadvantaged communities, have only five coastal access locations along more than 64-miles of shoreline, many of which are restricted or limited compared to southern Santa Barbara County of which the majority of the 64-mile coastline is easily accessible. Given that many North County communities are recognized as disadvantaged communities under state guidelines (e.g., Assembly Bill 1550, Senate Bill 535), the current severe lack of coastal access and the status of completing even segments of the Coastal Trail in North County is a significant environmental justice issue. While, the Coastal Conservancy's *Completing the California Coastal Trail* recognizes that a near shoreline route for the Coastal Trail is not always possible and that a braided trail system may help achieve the goal of completing this important trail, significant progress is needed to improve equitable access to and along the North county shoreline. Therefore, an official interim Coastal Trail route and improved coastal access need to be identified to facilitate trail planning and funding.

1.7 Trail Study Organization

The Trail Study is organized into the following sections:

- **1.0 Introduction** – Trail Study purpose and process overview.
- **2.0 Existing Trails, Coastal Access and Recreation** – Description of key existing local and regional recreational facilities, coastal access points and access, limitation to public access, and existing on-road routes.
- **3.0 Trail Issues Overview** – Summary of natural and man-made constraints and opportunities for trail implementation.

- **4.0 Interim Trail Alignment Implementation** – Identification, evaluation, and recommendation for a feasible interim trail alignment.
- **5.0 Trail Forward** – Discussion of trail implementation strategies, planning and environmental review process, and other opportunities worth consideration and coordination.

1.8 Community Involvement

SBCAG recognizes that strategic public outreach is critical in engaging the community and recreation leaders, particularly to help identify reasonable and preferred alignments for the interim Coastal Trail. As part of this Trail Study, the Trails Council conducted public outreach to ensure that interested members of the public had the opportunity to share their opinions on the interim trail alignment options. In addition, the Trails Council organized and established an Advisory Committee consisting of responsible agencies, recreation advocacy groups, and property owners.

Key objectives for the community involvement and public outreach process included:

1. Develop framework for stakeholder engagement and public outreach.
2. Foster multi-agency coordination for efficient and collaborative trail designation and implementation.
3. Solicit input from communities across the County.
4. Increase participation from key user groups.

The Advisory Committee provided periodic feedback on identification of the interim trail alignment and goals and policies for implementation of the trail alignment through a series of meetings (three in total) in 2019 and 2020. Members of the Advisory Committee include



representatives of the following organizations:

- Allan Hancock Collage
- California Coastal Conservancy
- California Department of Transportation, District 5
- California State Parks
- City of Guadalupe
- City of Lompoc
- County Riders & Hikers Trail Advisory Committee
- County of Santa Barbara, Community Services/Parks
- County of Santa Barbara, Public Works
- County of Santa Barbara, Planning & Development
- The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County
- Gaviota Coast Conservancy
- Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition

The goal of the community involvement and public outreach process was to encourage active involvement of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the

population and recreational community, and to engage stakeholders through the Trail Study process at key junctions. The Trails Council and SBCAG took the following steps to engage the public:

- Created a stakeholder contact database that included community members, contacts from related agencies and nonprofits, local parks department staff, local elected officials, and community recreation organizations.
- Assembled an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from local agencies, recreation staff, property owners, and community recreation advocates.
- Conducted several public workshops to support the needs assessment to collect comments and guide identification of an interim trail alignment.
- Developed a questionnaire and surveyed stakeholders for input from across the County.
- Employed several outreach outlets including a website for the study, email lists, press communications, social media, and flyers.



Community Outreach | Buellton, CA | January 2020

Photo: Brian Bresolin



We need your input!

Exploring New Trail Routes from Gaviota to Guadalupe


The Northern Santa Barbara County Interim California Coastal Trail Study

The Gaviota to Guadalupe Trail Study will identify the preferred routes for a continuous trail through Northern Santa Barbara County with links to the coast. Input from community members will help us to determine the best routes for the trail. Join us to learn about this process, review preliminary study results, and share your recommendations and local knowledge.


Public Workshop

When: Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 6:00 pm
Where: Dick DeWees Community and Senior Center
 1120 W Ocean Ave., Lompoc, CA 93436
Website: <http://bit.ly/ct-route>
Contact Us: coastaltrail@sbctrails.org

Visit our website to sign-up for future workshop and public hearing notifications



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
Trails Council



SBCAG
santa barbara county association of governments



Surf Beach

Trails, Coastal Access, and Recreation

CHAPTER **2**

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2.1 Existing Coastal Access Overview

The North County of Santa Barbara consists of a larger expanse of land and a higher population than the South County. Despite these figures, the North County has fewer recreational opportunities, especially for the outdoors and coastal areas. As discussed further below, this is largely in part due to private land ownership, the nearly 100,000-acre Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), and much more stringent environmental restrictions (e.g., habitat protections). Presented below is an overview of existing coastal access and regional recreation afforded in the North County study area of this Trail Study.

Coastal access locations and recreational use information is drawn from prior studies, State Parks data, and supplemented with Trails Council-performed field surveys. Public coastal access in the North County has historically been limited by land ownership patterns, few public roads near the shoreline to provide access, and more recently by endangered species protection requirements (Table 2). These factors combined to limit North County, including for disadvantaged and minority communities. North County public access is restricted to only 5 coastal access points along 64-miles of shoreline for a regional population in excess of 200,000 residents (Santa Barbara County Parks 2006), with less than 10-miles (12 percent) of this shoreline open to public access. North County public beach access points are: Gaviota State Park, Jalama Beach County Park, Ocean Beach County Park, Surf Beach, Point Sal, and Ranch Guadalupe Dunes County Park. Access at these widely scattered locations can also be closed or limited due to endangered species restrictions or launch operations at VAFB. Approximately 36.5-miles of the North County coastline occur within the VAFB and are restricted from public coastal access due to national security concerns. Further, coastal access is either restricted or limited seasonally or year-round at three of the five access points due to western snowy plover nesting season restrictions, while private and federal property ownership

which ban access from 88 percent of the North County shoreline.

The County's Gaviota Coast Plan currently designates a bluff-top location for the Coastal Trail for 19.6-miles through Hollister Ranch and the Dangermond Preserve from Gaviota State Park to Jalama Beach County Park, while the County's Point Sal Reserve has over 8-miles of existing/planned trails, several of which could become designated Coastal Trail routes. However, the remaining 40+ miles of North County shoreline lacks a clear plan for implementing the Coastal Trail.



Kite surfing at Jalama Beach County Park

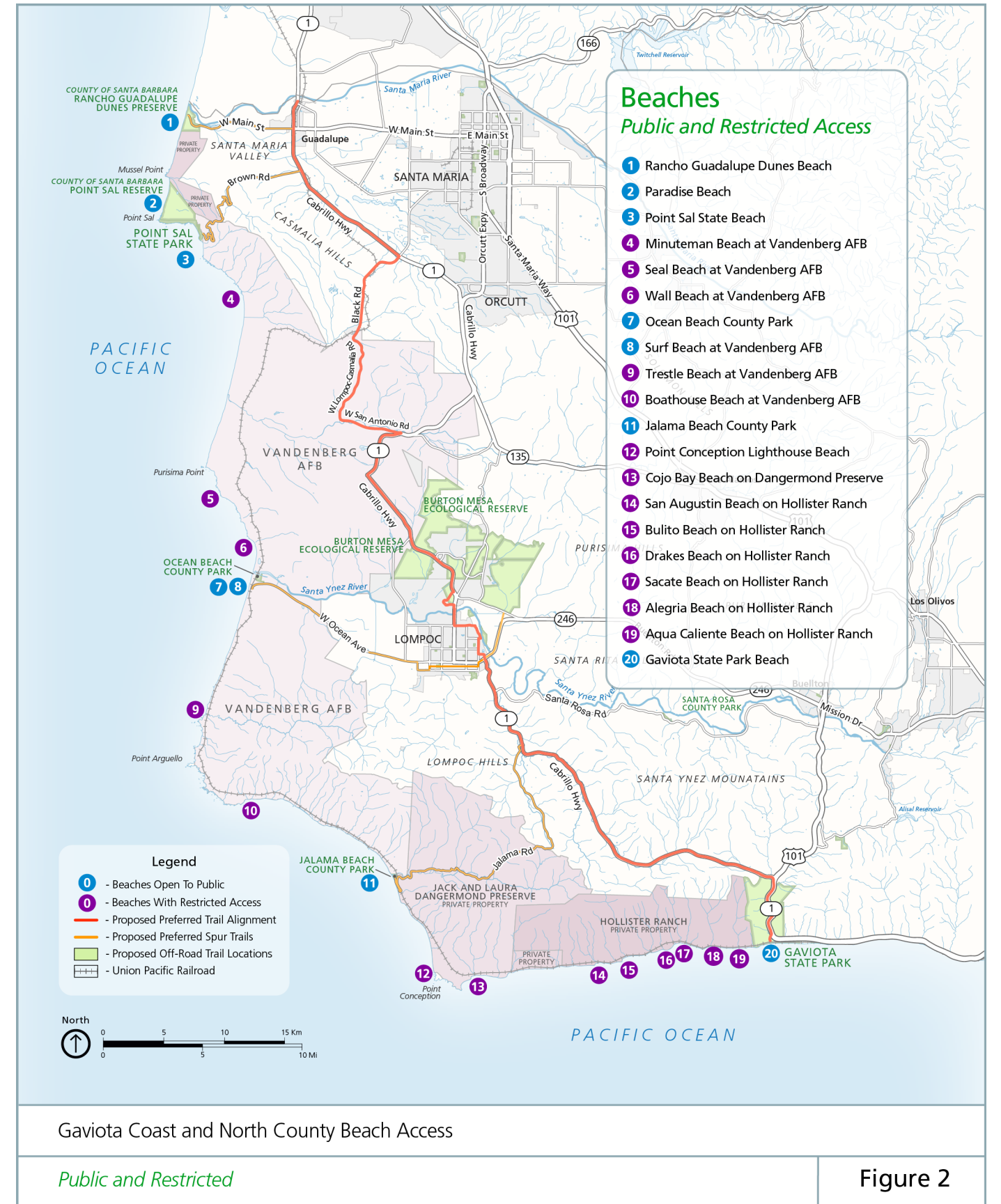


Figure 2



Property Ownership	Miles of Shoreline	Existing Public Coastal Access	Planned Public Coastal Access	Current Access Restrictions	% of North Cty Shoreline
Hollister Ranch Association	11.1-miles	Public Access prohibited	Hollister Ranch Public Access Program under preparation; access provisions unknown	Gated community currently closed to public	17.3
Nature Conservancy Dangermond Preserve	8.5-miles	No existing public access	Management plan under preparation; access provisions unknown; pending 1.5-mile-long Gerber Trail Easement	Gated ranch currently closed to public	13.6
Jalama Beach County Park	1.0-mile	Campground and 110 day use public beach access parking spaces	Campground expansion, new coastal trail and beach access in planning	Public park, no restrictions	1.5
Vandenberg Air Force Base	36.5-miles	Public access generally prohibited, except at Point Sal and Surf Beach	Potential access improvements at Point Sal	Secure military base, public access generally prohibited	57.0
Surf Beach (VAFB)	¼-mile	32 coastal access at parking spaces Amtrak station parking lot	3,000-foot-long Ocean Beach to Surf Beach back dune Coastal Trail recently opened; boardwalk construction under review	Beach to north and south closed March 1st -September 30th due to western snowy plover restrictions	0.4
Ocean Beach County Park	1/5-mile	93 coastal access parking spaces and beach access trail	3,000-foot-long Ocean Beach to Surf Beach back dune Coastal Trail recently opened; boardwalk construction under review planned	Beach closed March 1st -September 30th due to western snowy plover restrictions	0.3
Point Sal State Park and County Point Sal Reserve	3.6-miles	Brown Road trailhead, Point Sal Road/ Trail and informal Ridge Trail provide access	Access improvements under study as part of Countywide Recreation Master Plan	Access occasionally closed due to VAFB missile launches	5.6
Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park	2.7 miles	50 space parking lot	No improvements currently planned	Most of Park closed March 1st -September 30th due to western snowy plover restrictions; beach access and shoreline open	4.2
Total	64-miles	No existing formalized Coastal Trail segments; 5 coastal access points in 64 miles of shoreline	Planned improvements through Hollister Ranch and Dangermond Reserve inhibited by private property ownership; improvements at Point Sal under review	Access restrictions and beach closures affect 3 of 5 coastal access points	7.8-miles of 64-miles of shoreline open to public (12%)



Gaviota State Park

The Gaviota Coast is recognized as a recreational area of statewide and national importance by Santa Barbara County and the State and Federal Governments. The western portion of the Gaviota Coast at U.S. 101 and Gaviota Pass consists of the southern-most extent of the North County Interim Coastal Trail study area. Gaviota State Park lies along both sides of Hwy 101, a high-speed four lane expressway, and contains more than 5,500 acres of primarily undisturbed natural habitats. Primary access to the park is off of Hwy 101, with access also available at the north end of the park off of State Route 1, a two-lane expressway. The park is generally bordered by large private ranches along most of its boundaries, including Hollister Ranch to the west; however, the western end of Los Padres National Forest abuts the northeast border of the park.

The park extends roughly 3-miles inland along the Gaviota Creek watershed from the coast along both sides of US Hwy 101 into the Santa Ynez Mountains to the intersection of Hwy 1 and Hwy 101. The park also extends along the shoreline east for nearly 2.8-miles (outside of the study area), including over 2-miles of a broad coastal terrace of between 200 to 750 feet in width south of US 101. The County's 2016 Gaviota Coast Plan designates a segment of the Coastal Trail through this area contains



The beach at Gaviota State Park is highly popular and provides direct coastal access to nearly 3 miles of sandy beach. Amenities at Gaviota State Park include beach parking, restrooms, a pier, fishing, boat launch, beach front picnic facilities, hiking, and overnight camping.

a planned 2-mile-long trail approved by California State Parks in 2008 but as yet undeveloped. Five major informal coastal access points are located in the eastern section of this park, with free informal roadside parking for approximately 110 vehicles located off of US 101. The Gaviota Marine Terminal, which is undergoing abandonment, is surrounded by the eastern area of the Park.

Gaviota State Park

Ownership: California State Parks

Parking: 140 paid coastal access parking spaces.

Regional Access: Via Hwy 101

Beach Access: Approximately 2 miles of coastal terrace and 500 feet of wide sandy beach,

Access Restrictions: The park is open for day use from 7am to sunset. Dogs are allowed within the campground and day use areas but not allowed on the beach.

Beach Conditions: Wide sandy beach with potential 4.5 miles of walkable area, all but 0.5 mile of which is restricted for public access by VAFB.

Existing Uses: Sunbathing, swimming, surfing, beach walking, kayaking, scuba diving/snorkeling, fishing, small watercraft launch, windsurfing, restrooms, benches, picnic areas, tent camping, and RV camping.

Level of Use: High.

The park supports almost 10-miles of existing hiking trails. These trails provide a continuous link from the shoreline west of Hwy 101 extending inland 3.55-miles north to Hwy 1 along the Beach to Backcountry Trail, Overlook Fire Road, and Ortega Trail. These linked trails ascend from sea level to over 1,000 feet in elevation providing spectacular views along the coast. The trails provide the public with access to scenic natural resources including coastal sage scrub, native grasslands, chaparral oak woodlands and the pools and riparian woodland along perennial Gaviota Creek. The park supports three existing major trail heads; the Beach to Backcountry Trailhead near the existing shoreline parking lot, the Gaviota Peak Trailhead 3-miles inland east of Hwy 101, and the Las Cruces Trailhead west of Hwy 101 adjacent to Vista Del Mar School. The park



provides a developed beach facilities, including 12 shoreline picnic sites, approximately 140 coastal access parking spaces and 41 low-cost developed campsites that accommodate tents, trailers, and RVs, and the only public fishing pier and boat launch along approximately 100-miles of shoreline between Goleta Beach to the south and Pismo Beach to the north. The campground is open weekdays and weekends from April 1 to September 30 and only open Friday through Sunday from October 1 to March 31.

Jalama Beach County Park

Jalama Beach County Park is a 59.5-acre rural beach park and campground that provides public access to 4,400 feet of shoreline that consists of a sandy beach of 50-100 feet wide backed by low vegetated sand dunes and coastal bluffs. Access to the park is available off of Jalama Road which winds through steep hillsides and valleys for 14-miles from Hwy 1; Jalama Road lies roughly 5-miles south of the City of Lompoc. Jalama Beach County Park is the only public coastal access point along roughly 35-miles



Jalama Beach County Park provides direct coastal access to over 4,400 feet of sandy beach backed by low, vegetated dunes fronting the park and low coastal bluffs to the north and south. Photo Source: John Murphy.

of shoreline between Gaviota State Park to the south and east and the Lompoc Valley to the north, and is one of the two coastal access points serving the 54,800 residents of the Lompoc Valley. Jalama Beach County Park is bordered to the north by the VAFB, the south and east by the Nature Conservancy's Dangermond Preserve and to the west by the Pacific Ocean. No public access from Jalama Beach

County Park into the undeveloped open coastal lands of VAFB or the Dangermond Preserve was permitted in 2020.

Jalama Beach County Park provides a developed beach park with 107 campsites that accommodate tents, trailers, and RVs, include 7 stationary RV cabins, a children's playground, picnic areas, a store and restaurant. One

Jalama Beach County Park

Ownership: County of Santa Barbara

Parking: 150 paid coastal access parking spaces.

Regional Access: Via Jalama Road from Hwy 1, 4.5 miles south of the City of Lompoc

Beach Access: Approximately 2 miles of wide sandy beach; access to up to 7 miles of shoreline depending upon tides further south

Access Restrictions: The park is open for day use from 7am to sunset. Dogs are allowed within the campground and day use areas but not allowed on the beach.

Beach Conditions: Wide sandy beach with potential 7 miles of walkable area.

Existing Uses: Sunbathing, swimming, surfing, beach walking, bird watching, restrooms, benches, picnic tables and BBQ areas, playgrounds, tend camping, RV camping, and cabin camping.

Level of Use: High.

formal coastal access way is developed across the dunes and several informal access trails also exists. Jalama Beach county Parks provides access to famous big wave surf breaks, outstanding kite boarding and unspoiled beach going opportunities. Beach goers may walk south along the beach for 4 to 5-miles and north for 1 to 2-miles, depending upon the tides. The park also provides 150 paid coastal access parking spaces for day-use, which are routinely oversubscribed during peak summer months and weekends. No formal coastal access trails or any segment of the Coastal Trail is yet developed within Jalama Beach county Park. However, informal beach access is available through a steep ravine at the Park's southern end, known as "the crack". An informal trail through this ravine provides the most direct access to Jalama's famed surf spot



known as Tarantulas. In 2020, the County began review of potential campground expansion, construction of a ¾-mile bluff top segment of the Coastal Trail and potentially a coastal access trail down the crack.

Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park

Surf Beach and Ocean Beach are beaches located approximately 0.5-miles apart south of the Santa Ynez River estuary in the Lompoc Valley. Parking areas for both beaches are inland of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), which requires crossing the tracks to gain beach access. The beaches and sand dunes west of the UPRR are under the ownership of Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) which regulates and controls public access. The sand dunes west of the UPRR are fenced and signed to control public access to protect nesting areas of the western snowy plover, substantially limiting public access as discussed below. Approximately ½-mile of beach is accessible to the public in this location as access north of Ocean Beach and south of Surf Beach is closed for plover protection and security reasons as discussed further below. These beaches are the only public coastal access in the Lompoc Valley, serving a population of more than 54,800 residents' leaving limited options for beach recreation for these residents, including many from disadvantaged communities. These beaches are adjacent to the Vandenberg State Marine Reserve, which has additional restrictions on



Walkable beach area between Surf and Ocean Beach is subject to closure between March 1 and September 30 annually due to snowy plover nesting season. Ocean Beach Park provides active and passive recreational resources such as playgrounds, bird watching lookouts, and meandering paved pathways. Photo Source: Dan Pedersen, County of Santa Barbara, 2020.

Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park

Ownership: County of Santa Barbara and VAFB.

Parking: Surf Beach and Ocean Beach Park provide approximately 35 and 90 free parking spaces, respectively.

Regional Access: Via West Ocean Avenue from Hwy 1.

Beach Access: Approximately 0.5 mile of walkable beach fronting Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park; access further north or south is restricted due to security and plover protection concerns at VAFB. A new informal 3,000-foot-long back dune trail now links Ocean Beach and Surf Beach, allowing beach goers to bypass plover restriction zones.

Access Restrictions: Access to the shoreline at Ocean Beach County Park is closed from March 1 through September 30 due to snowy plover nesting season. Access at Surf Beach is now open year round.

Beach Conditions: Wide sandy beach with potential 4.5 miles of walkable area, all but 0.5 mile of which is restricted for public access by VAFB.

Existing Uses: Sunbathing, swimming, surfing, beach walking, bird watching, and restrooms at both areas; benches, picnic tables and BBQ areas, and playgrounds at Ocean Beach County Park.

Level of Use: Moderate to low during seasonal restriction



activities, such as no fishing, even for subsistence fishers.

Ocean Beach County Park is a developed County park of approximately 5 acres located on the south bank of the Santa Ynez River estuary. The park provides over 90 spaces of free coastal access parking, benches, picnic and BBQ areas, and a playground. The park has almost 1,000 feet of shoreline frontage although separated from the beach by the UPRR. Formal beach access is available via a developed concrete walkway beneath the UPRR trestle bridge across the Santa Ynez River, although during high water conditions this under-crossing can be flooded. This access is closed for 7 months of the year during the prime beach-going seasons of spring, summer and fall to protect nesting plovers. Informal beach access is available through several un-permitted trails that cross the UPRR, which can expose beach-goers to hazards from high-speed trains. The park also has almost 200 feet of frontage along the open waters of the Santa Ynez River estuary.

Surf Beach is accessed via the Lompoc-Surf train station, which consists of a sheltered concrete platform, 30 parking spaces and a restroom located at the terminus of Park Road. The station and adjacent parking lot are owned and operated by UPRR and served by the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner train route. Although a primary purpose of this station and parking lot is for Amtrak train service, coastal access parking is permitted and beach access is provided by an *at grade* crossing of the UPRR with access safety control provided by signal and crossing guard arms. An informal trail leads through the low dunes to the beach, with plover exclusion signs and fencing limited access to the dunes.

Public coastal access has been extremely constrained at these two beaches due to nesting restrictions for the western snowy plover. Ocean Beach Park and much of the coastline are closed between March 1st through September 30 due to the snowy plover nesting season, which severely inhibits coastal access during peak spring, summer and early fall periods. Surf Beach access was permitted during this period, but historically limited if more than 50 “violations” of plover protection measures were recorded.

However, in 2020, VAFB instituted two important changes that measurably benefit public coastal access. First, VAFB suspended the 50 plover nesting area “violations” that often led to beach closures for much of the year, leaving no local coastal access for the more than 54,800 residents of the Lompoc Valley. VAFB also opened an informal ½ mile-long back dune trail along the UPRR, outside of the plover exclusion area to permit beach goers to park at Ocean Beach County Park and walk south to Surf Beach, even when direct beach access at Ocean Beach is closed. Preliminary planning is also underway for construction of a boardwalk over the long term to further facilitate public access between Ocean Beach and Surf Beach.

Point Sal Area

The Point Sal Area includes 84 acre Point Sal State Park, 82.5-acre area around Point Sal owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and the 937-acre Point Sal Reserve owned by the County, located along the North County coast at the northern boundary of VAFB, 5 miles southwest of the City of Guadalupe. Public access to the Point Sal area is available off State Route 1 via Brown road to Point Sal Trailhead. The historic Point Sal Road is currently gated proximate to the trailhead and closed to vehicular traffic. The Point Sal area is characterized by steep slopes and ridgelines and tall sand dunes which back to wide sandy beaches. Point Sal Ridge, a steep east-west oriented ridgeline divides inland valleys and coastal ranches from ½-mile long Point Sal Beach and the more remote 1.5-mile long Paradise Beach to the north. Public land ownership within the Point Sal Reserve Management Area encompasses Point Sal, portions of Point Sal Ridge which bisects the area, a 350-500-foot-tall coastal dune complex to the northwest, rolling hills, inland valleys and wide sandy beaches at Point Sal State Beach and Paradise Beach. In addition to Point Sal Road, a network of jeep ways and old ranch roads traverse the inland valleys

The public enjoyed full vehicular access to **Point Sal Beach** until landslides during the 1982-83 El Nino and other subsequent large storm events severely damaged the access road, depriving North County residents of a key coastal access point.



and hills and provide access to Point Sal. Further, Point Sal Ridge is traversed by a well-developed informal trail that crosses VAFB land, private ranchland, and land under County ownership within the Point Sal Reserve, as well as that owned by the federal Bureau of Land Management.

Recreational access to Point Sal and area beaches is challenging due to steep topography, distances, road closures and periodic access limitations. Point Sal Road, the primary access route to Point Sal State Beach is currently gated at its intersection with Brown Road, with public parking available along the road shoulder of Brown Road. Hikers then traverse a well-developed graveled segment of the road for over 2-miles and up a ridgeline of over 1,000 feet in elevation to a second gate near the ridgeline. Visitors then descend over 1,000 feet across VAFB for approximately 2.3-miles along a severely degraded reach of Point Sal Road which acts as a trail to Point Sal Beach. Visiting Point Sal Beach currently requires an almost 9-mile round trip with 4,000 feet of elevation gain and loss, a strenuous day that prevents many, but the very fit, from accessing the beach. Although Point Sal Road south of the ridgeline is degraded with several points of severe erosion or road collapse, the road remains passable by most vehicles to the ridgeline, and access to a historic parking lot above Point Sal State Beach by four-wheel drive vehicles remains possible.

Access to Paradise Beach is more challenging still, but offers a wildland beach experience unique in Southern and Central California. After ascending Point Sal Road from the trailhead, visitors traverse the informal Point Sal Ridge trail up and down for almost 2-miles from 1,200 feet to sea level at Point Sal, then another ½-mile to the southern edge of the 1.5-mile-long Paradise Beach.¹ Paradise Beach is wide and highly scenic, backed by sand dunes of 100-200 feet in height, with springs draining from the base of the dunes. Visitors pass a major harbor seal haul out and may see herds of deer, peregrine falcons, and elephant seals on offshore rocks, otters and perhaps even a mountain lion or bobcat. From the existing trailhead on Brown Road, reaching Paradise Beach involves a 11 to 12-mile round trip with more than 5,000 feet of elevation gain and loss due to the undulating nature of the Point Sal Ridge Trail.

VAFB can limit or prevent access along Point Sal Road at the VAFB property line in the interest of public safety or base security, particularly during missile launches. Recreational access has been limited at times through use of temporary barbed-wire fencing across the exist-

¹ Roughly the first half of the informal Point Sal Ridge Trail cross land owned primarily by VAFB or limited sections of private ranch land until reaching County or BLM owned land; no formal trail easement or right to pass agreement exists for this first part of the trail, although the trail is well developed and receives moderate use.



Point Sal (pictured left) and Paradise Beach (pictured right) comprise one of the most well-preserved portions of the Central California coast, offering visitors potential outstanding coastal access and recreational opportunities in a beautiful coastal wild land setting. Temporary access restrictions to Point Sal, Point Sal State Beach, and Paradise Beach at the VAFB property have included construction of barriers, placement of signs, installation of barbed-wire fencing and sometimes patrols by security personnel.



Point Sal Area

Ownership: County, VAFB, CSP, BLM and private.

Parking: Road shoulder parking at Brown Road and Point Sal Trail trailhead.

Regional Access: Beach walk from Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve; Brown Road and the Point Sal Road/Trail.

Beach Access: Approximately 0.6 mile of walkable beach at Point Sal State Park, and another 1.5 miles of walkable beach at Paradise Beach.

Access Restrictions: Access sporadically restricted due to security concerns at VAFB during missile launches.

Beach Conditions: Wide sandy beaches at both Paradise Beach and Point Sal State Park. Rocky shoreline and steep cliffs around Point Sal separate the two beaches.

Existing Uses: Sun bathing, swimming, beach walking, wildlife viewing, hiking.

Level of Use: Low levels of use.

ing gate entrance at the property boundary, erection of *No Trespassing* signs, and even patrols of Point Sal Road by guards. However, hikers and backpackers continue to make their way to Point Sal State Beach, Point Sal, and even Paradise Beach. Further, although officially prohibited, bikers frequently use Point Sal Road to access the beach.

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve

The Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve consists of over 500 acres of land surrounded by private agricultural land, located just south of the Santa Maria River mouth and San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara County line. The preserve is located approximately 4.3-miles west of the City of Guadalupe, along a segment of the Central California coast which supports the largest remaining dune system south of San Francisco, and the second largest extent of coastal dunes in California. The preserve is owned and managed by Santa Barbara County Parks and consists of approximately 2.5 miles of wide sandy beach, a prominent and shifting sandy dunes complex, public restrooms, nature

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve

Ownership: Santa Barbara County.

Parking: Approximately 50 free parking spaces available, depending on sand build up within the parking lot.

Regional Access: Via West Main Street from the City of Guadalupe.

Beach Access: Approximately 2.5 miles of walkable beach.

Access Restrictions: Access to the majority of Rancho Guadalupe Dunes is closed from March 1 through September 30 due to western snowy plover nesting season; access to and along the shoreline remains available.

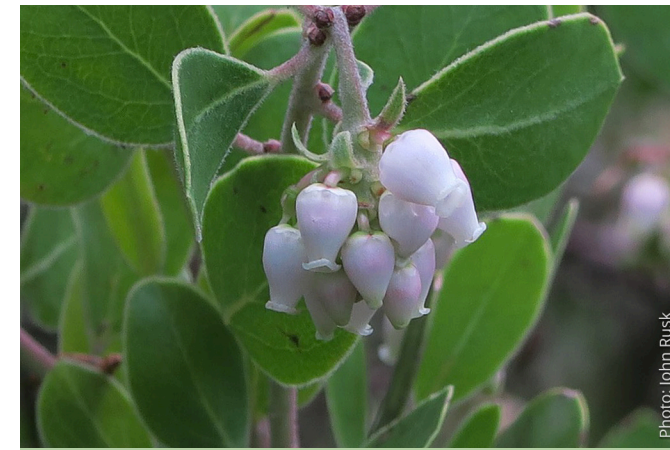
Beach Conditions: Wide sandy beach and extensive area of sandy dune complexes.

Existing Uses: Sun bathing, swimming, surfing, beach walking, bird viewing, restrooms, benches, and picnic tables.

Level of Use: Moderate to low during seasonal restrictions.

infographics, and park benches. Access into the preserve is free for all visitors, and the parking area supports approximately 50 parking spaces, though the amount of available parking is subject to change, as sand can accumulate within the parking lot reducing the number of available spaces. The beach at the preserve is one of only two public coastal access points serving the City of Guadalupe and communities within the Santa Maria Valley, with a population of more than 146,000 residents. Many of the communities within the area are considered to be disadvantaged.

When not subject to seasonal restrictions, hikers and beach walks are able to walk uninterrupted for 2.5-miles along the beach south to Mussel Rock, and over 17-miles north to the Pismo Beach. The segment of sandy beach extending from Pismo Beach Pier to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve is formally designated as a portion of the Coastal Trail, and is one of the longest extents of sandy beach designated as the Coastal Trail. Access to the 1.5-mile-long Paradise Beach within and the County's Point Sal Reserve is not possible without trespassing



The Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve boasts incredibly high biodiversity and is home to 500 native plants and animals, many of which are endemic to the region and 11 plant species found nowhere else in the world. One such species is the shagbark manzanita (Arctostaphylos rufis), which is found only in the North County and southern region of San Luis Obispo County. Photo Source: John Rusk

across Mussel Rock. The private property extends over Mussel Rock for approximately 0.4-miles where many existing informal trails cross the outcroppings. Hikers use these informal trails as connectors between Guadalupe Dunes Preserve and Paradise Beach to hike four miles or more along the shoreline. Much like many of the other coastal access points within the North County, Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve is subject to restrictions during western snowy plover nesting season, which typically extends from March 1 to September 30, the peak beach going season. The preserve also supports habitat for the endangered California least tern. These restrictions can inhibit coastal access during peak spring, summer and early fall periods.

2.2 Regional Park and Open Space Trails

Access to coastal areas and shoreline within the North County is highly limited, and so too are larger natural public open spaces within the Trail Study area suitable to accommodate a potential interim for the Coastal Trail. Though smaller parks and recreational facilities exist throughout

the region, few large expanses of public land accessible for off-road hiking, biking, and equestrian riding opportunities are available for residents of the Lompoc Valley and Santa Maria Valley. In general, while existing regional parks and open spaces support expansive trail networks, access can be restricted to certain user groups depending on location. Within the inland portions of the Trail Study area, larger natural open spaces are limited to the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park, Ken Adam Park, River Park and Gaviota State Park discussed above.

Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve

The Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve consists of 5,368 acres of land owned and managed by CDFW. The Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve was acquired and entrusted to CDFW by the State Lands Commission and County of Santa Barbara. The Preserve protects unique and sensitive Burton Mesa Chaparral which occurs nowhere else but within the sandy soils of the Orcutt Formation north of the City of Lompoc in the Purisima Hills. The extent of this unique chaparral was first estimated to exist in over 22,000 acres, but has been significantly reduced over the course of the past century to extent estimated to be 8,604 acres in 1988 due to urban development and agricultural use of the region, military operations, oil exploration, and the introduction of exotic and invasive plant species. To this day, the exact extent of what remains of the Burton Mesa Chaparral is unknown; however, 3,000 acres occur within the reserve. The reserve surrounds or borders the communities of Vandenberg Village, Mission Hills, and Mesa Oaks, and is divided by a number of roads including Hwy 1, Harris Grade Road, and Burton Mesa Boulevard.

Part of what makes the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve unique is that the Burton Mesa Chaparral habitat supports a number of sensitive and unique plant species, some of which are known only to occur within the Burton Mesa Chaparral. In total, the reserve supports and provides habitat for at least 326 species of native plants and more than 200 species of native animals, 22 plants of which are rare, threatened, or endangered, with 39 special status animals. An additional 11 plant species are



The Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve contains a network of nearly 52 miles of existing informal trails and roadways, however, only 28 miles are open for hiking and dog walking. The restrictions implemented by CDFW are intended help to preserve the unique habitat and sensitive plant and animal species, but inhibit opportunity for additional recreational uses within this area by banning equestrians and mountain bikers, two important trail user groups.

found nowhere else in the world. Also, a total of 53 cultural resource sites are known within the reserve, including sensitive archaeological sites, a historic road or trail corridor, and archaeological isolates (CDFW 2017).

There are no public facilities currently within the reserve, with no designated parking and restroom facilities. This includes an absence of a formal trail system; however, throughout the reserve are numerous miles of old oil and utility service roads and an informal network of pathways that are used by local residents and visitors. In total, the informal network for roads and trails within the reserve

totals approximately 52-miles. As part of the trail plan within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve Land Management Plan, CDFW identified that approximately 28-miles of trails would be allowed to remain open to the public, although in practice little action has occurred to close trails. Authorized use of the informal trail network within the reserve is limited to hiking, wildlife viewing and dog walking (on leash), while all other uses including horseback riding and bicycling are prohibited (CDFW 2017). Nevertheless, field observations of the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve by Trails Council staff as part of this Trail Study noted ev-



At Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, substantial portions of the preserve may be subject to seasonal closures or restrictions for nesting western snowy plover; however, at least some portions of the coast and access from the parking lot to the shore is assured. This supports existing north-south access along the coast for beach walkers nearly year round.



idence of recent mountain biking and horseback riding within the reserve.

La Purisima Mission State Historic Park

La Purisima Mission State Historic Park is owned and managed by the California State Parks and located approximately 1.75-miles northeast of the City of Lompoc on Purisima Road. The highlight of the park is the Misión La Purísima Concepción de Maria Santísima, founded in 1787 by Spanish Missionaries, the eleventh mission of 21 Franciscan Missions of Alta California. The mission was partially destroyed by a major earthquake in 1812 and was relocated and reconstructed. Today, it is considered the most completely restored mission in California, and the park serves to preserve the history of the mission and region (California State Parks 2020).

The park consists of nearly 2,000 acres and also provides 25-miles of hiking trails that lead through La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and connect with the adjacent communities of Mesa Rock and Missions Hills to the west, and the La Purisima Management Unit of the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve to the north via an existing trail (Prelado de los Tesoros de la Purisima 2016). The system of trails is open to use by the public for hiking, wildlife viewing, on leash dog walking, horseback riding, and limited use of selected trails by mountain bikers year round. Access to the trail system is free for pedestrians,

while vehicles visiting the mission area and visitor center are subject to payment of fees.

Ken Adam Park

Ken Adam Park is a 42-acre community park located within the City of Lompoc north of the Santa Ynez River and adjacent to Allan Hancock College. Park amenities offered here include playgrounds, BBQ areas, horseshoe and volleyball facilities, and nature trails that are enjoyed by a range of trail users, including hikers, dog walkers, bicyclists, and equestrians. Ken Adam Park includes the 1.6-mile-long Allan Hancock College Bike Path, a separated Class I bike path connecting Allan Hancock College and the commercial areas of the City of Lompoc. Where the bike path connects with Hwy 1 north of the Santa Ynez River, the bike path is separated from the Hwy 1 travel lanes via a guard and handrail, which offers users of the bike path a much more comfortable and safer route over the bridge. It crosses the Santa Ynez River bridge along Hwy 1. From the southern end of the bridge, the bike path continues into the City of Lompoc adjacent to Hwy 1 before terminating at an intersection near a commercial shopping center and the Motel 6.

River Park and Riverbend Park

River Park and Riverbend Park consists three separate properties comprising nearly 227 acres of regional park land adjacent to the Santa Ynez River on the eastern bor-



The La Purisima Mission State Historic Park offers 25 miles of extensive and interweaving public hiking and riding trails that connect with adjacent residential communities and other public hiking trails within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve.



The 1.6-mile-long, Class 1, Allan Hancock College Bike Path begins in Ken Adam Park (pictured left) and connects walkers, runners and cyclists with the City of Lompoc. The Santa Ynez River cuts through River Park (pictured right) and features a Class 1 multi-use bike path along the west side of the river.

der of the City of Lompoc. The parks offer a range of recreational amenities, including but not limited to playgrounds, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts, tent and RV camping, BBQ areas, the Riverbend Multi-use Path, and a bike skills park. The multi-use path is a Class I separated bike path that extends for 1.5-miles just west of the Santa Ynez River adjacent to residential neighborhoods within the City of Lompoc. The multi-use path connects with Riverbend Park to the north, and terminates at Riverside Drive near the southwestern border of the City of Lompoc. The multi-use path at River Park and Riverbend Park is enjoyed by pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, cyclists, and even equestrians.

2.3 Major Coastal Properties with Restricted Public Access

Within the North County, there exist two expanses of private property and one military base, which largely prohibit access to 88 percent of the North County coast. These properties include the privately owned Hollister Ranch, the Dangermond Preserve, owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy, and VAFB.

Hollister Ranch (Private)

Hollister Ranch consists of 133 private residential parcels totaling approximately 14,500 acres, with limited agricultural/ranching use, primarily cattle grazing. Hollister Ranch extends along 8.5-miles of the Gaviota Coast west of Gaviota State Park and west of the Dangermond Preserve and encompasses more than 17 percent of North County's coastline. The Hollister Ranch coastline consists of rocky inter-tidal areas, steep coastal bluffs, and several wide sandy beaches. In total, there are six larger beaches along the coastline that are largely available only to residents of Hollister Ranch. All of the 133 parcels are held in private ownership by residents of Hollister Ranch, many of which have been subject to divided ownership, with to up to 12 owners. This move to fractional ownership over the last several decades has resulted in substantial increases in private access to the coast from the increase in owner and guest access, while public access remains prohibited. This shift to multiple owners and often several residences per parcel (e.g., guest houses, barn conversions, etc.) has also altered the character of the Ranch to increasingly residential and perhaps less rural agricultural. There were an estimated 1,100 members of the Hollister Ranch Homeowners Association in 2018, for a total of 133 legal parcels. The entire 8.5-mile-long reach of the coastline along Hollister Ranch is privately managed and public ac-



cess along the coast is prohibited, while surfers and other groups sometimes access beach and surf breaks via boat. Hollister Ranch represents a significant portion of the County's coastline where public access is prohibited. Public access to Hollister Ranch is currently limited only to managed school groups, education programs, scientific research parties, and guests of the Hollister Ranch homeowners.

In 1982, in an effort to ensure managed public access to the coastline of Hollister Ranch could be managed and maintained, the California Coastal Commission approved the 1981/1982 Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Program, which outlined provisions for the development of facilities such as pedestrian trails, bike paths, and other measures that would provide continuous lateral access to the coast by the public (California Coastal Commission 1981). In addition, the County approved the 2016 Gaviota Coast Plan, which included – Parks, Recreation, & Trails (PRT) map (Figure 4-4) that depicts a continuous nearshore Coastal Trail of approximately 21-miles in length through Hollister Ranch and the Dangermond Preserve terminating at Jalama Beach County Park. However, to date, the provisions of the 1982 Coastal Access Program for the Hollister Ranch have not been implemented and no segments of

the Coastal Trail in Hollister Ranch have been acquired. As a result, the public has never been able to exercise their constitutional right of access to the beaches of Hollister Ranch (California Coastal Commission 2020).

In 2019, following finalization of the settlement agreement between the Hollister Ranch homeowners and the State Coastal Conservancy, the California Coastal Commission began the task of updating the Hollister Ranch Public Access Program. The aim of this update is to improve the coastal public access program to ensure the coastal resources at Hollister Ranch may be enjoyed by the public. The updated program is anticipated to be released in 2021.

Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve (Private)

The Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve (Dangermond Preserve) occupies almost 14 percent of the North County coastline (24,460 acres and 8.5-miles of coastline) south of Jalama Beach County Park and around Point Conception. The Dangermond Preserve encompasses lands of former Bixby Ranch, a working cattle ranch for over 200 years, with areas of active crop cultivation in several inland and coastal valleys and historic oil production and transport along the coastline. The Bixby Ranch was purchased



San Augustin Beach at Hollister Ranch

State Parks, the California Coastal Commission, the Coastal Conservancy, and the State Lands Commission are working collaboratively and in conjunction with the public to update the Hollister Ranch public access program to provide long-delayed access to this 8.5-mile stretch of coastline.



and donated to the Nature Conservancy by Jack and Laura Dangermond in December 2017, creating the Dangermond Preserve. The lands of the Dangermond Preserve, though historically grazed for ranching operations, with areas used for oil production and partially occupied by the United States military during World War II, are considered one of the last natural and wild areas of the California coast and are host to thousands of acres of native grasslands, marshes, oak woodlands, shrublands, dunes, and rocky inter-tidal habitats that support a diverse range of terrestrial and marine plants and animals (The Nature Conservancy 2019). It is the goal of the Nature Conservancy to preserve, restore, and manage the resources of the Dangermond Preserve, although the Conservancy's goals for public access have not been set forth.

Despite the Dangermond Preserve constituting a large portion of the North County coastline (approximately 14 percent), it remains unclear if the Nature Conservancy intends to implement a multiple use Coastal Trail as mapped under the County's Gaviota Coast Plan or continue to limit or prohibit open public access along the Coastal Trail. The preserve is located between Jalama Beach County Park and VAFB lands to the north, and the private Hollister Ranch to the east, and the only public coastal ac-

cess point within the regional of Dangermond Preserve is Jalama Beach County Park. There are no developed trails within the preserve, but there is an existing network of dirt roads associated with prior ranching operations as well as an existing paved road along the coastline. The UPRR also traverses the coastal bluffs within the preserve.

As outlined in the Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve Integrated Resources Management Plan, one of the goals of the Nature Conservancy is to manage and maintain the road network to reduce and minimize impact on natural resources. The management plan acknowledges that "[e]xisting roads may be used as trail...[and] [an] assessment of trail needs will be considered as programming for managed access and environmental education is developed." (The Nature Conservancy 2019). However, to date, no formal public access across the Dangermond Preserve has been established, and it is unclear when or if public use of existing roads will be permitted in the future to allow much needed coastal access within the preserve. The County's 2016 Gaviota Coast Plan includes a Parks, Recreation, & Trails (PRT) map (Figure 4-4) that depicts a continuous nearshore Coastal Trail along the 8.5-mile coastline of the Dangermond Reserve. The Dangermond Preserve was purchased after the release of the Gaviota Coast Plan,



A view from the road to Point Sal State Beach and Point Sal Reserve

Access to both the secured and not secured portions of VAFB lands is limited to military personnel, contractors, and guests. The current exceptions include Point Sal State Beach and Surf Beach. Rocket launches and other military activities often require coastal zone areas be temporarily closed to the public.



Vandenberg Air Force Base has 36.5 miles of coastline with no general public access except approximately 0.5-miles of coastline at Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park, where VAFB has recently opened a back dune trail linking Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach.

allowing the Nature Conservancy to consider the implications of the Coastal Trail proposal during the purchase. In addition, the County owns a 1.5-mile-long trail easement over portions of the Dangermond Preserve just south of Jalama Beach County Park along Cojo Road which are referred to as the "Gerber Fee Parcels". As part of the Gerber Fee Trail Feasibility Study prepared by the County in 2000, the County identified and evaluated several alternatives for an approximately 5-mile-long segment of the Coastal Trail across this easement extending from Jalama Beach County Park to Cojo Bay. Again, it is uncertain how the previously studied Gerber Fee trail easement would relate to the Nature Conservancy's management of public access through the Dangermond Preserve. However, provision of a 5-mile-long trail extending south from Jalama Beach County Park paralleling the existing paved road would be the longest off-road Coastal Trail segment in North County and a major benefit to public coastal access.

Vandenberg Air Force Base (Military)

VAFB is located along the County's western coastline within the North County, and occupies approximately 5.6 percent of the County's total land area and 36.5-miles of the County's coastline or 57 percent of the North County coastline. VAFB consists of approximately 99,100 acres of land owned by the United States Air Force and houses

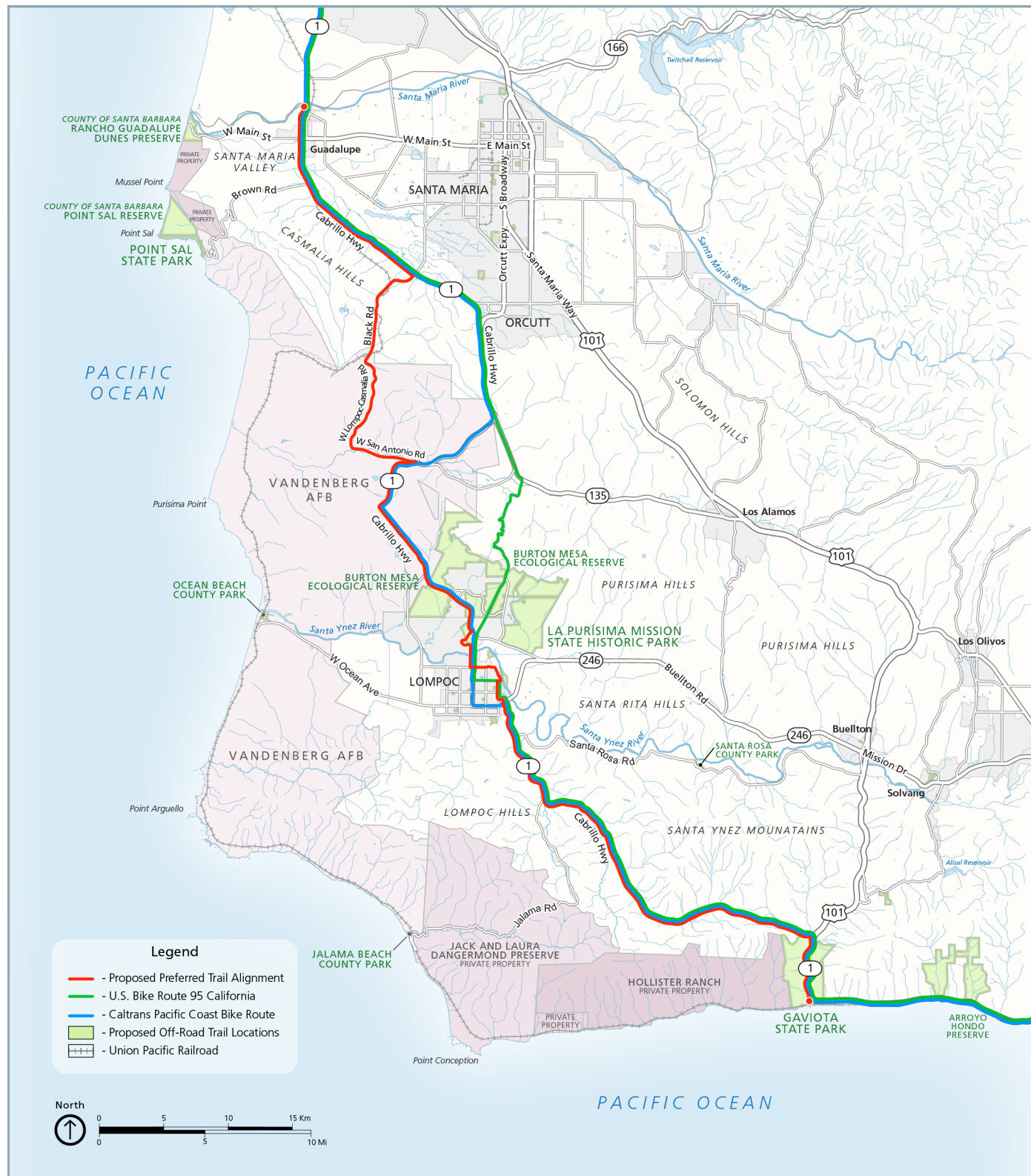
the United States Space Force's 30th Space Wing. It is the third largest military installation in the United States. General public access is prohibited at all, but one segment of VAFB's 36.5-miles of coastline. This one segment consists of the approximately 0.5-miles of coastline at Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park, where VAFB has recently opened a 3,000-foot-long informal back dune Coastal Trail linking Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach, which comprises only 1.3 percent of VAFB's coastline. However, as discussed above, Ocean Beach County Park is also subject to seasonal coastal access restrictions by VAFB due to snowy plover nesting habitat. Public access across VAFB is also permitted under informal agreements to Point Sal State Beach and Point Sal Reserve. The County will coordinate with VAFB to endeavor to formalize public access across VAFB lands to Point Sal State Beach and Point Sal. There exist several beaches within VAFB that are accessible and enjoyed by VAFB employees and their guests, including but not limited to Wall Beach and Minuteman Beach.

2.4 Existing North/South On-Road Routes

Many dedicated cyclists traverse the California coast, or at least portions of it, by cycling along their own preferred routes or along official designated routes (Figure 3). Cycling routes may follow major highway corridors and for some routes, may follow designated segments of the Coastal Trail.

Adventure Cycling Association Pacific Coast Route

The Adventure Cycling Association Pacific Coast Route is one of the few designated and official through bicycle touring routes along the Pacific Coast. The route covers approximately 1,854-miles extending from Vancouver, British Columbia to San Diego, California. Through California, the route largely follows road shoulders or protected bike lanes along Hwy 101 and Hwy 1, taking riders through many of the beautiful and diverse regions along the California coast, such as the rugged forested coasts of Hum-



Comparison of Existing Cycling Routes Through Study Area

Proposed Preferred Trail Alignment, U.S. Bike Route 95, and Caltrans Pacific Coast Route

Figure 3



boldt and Mendocino counties and the fertile agricultural regions of the Salinas and Santa Maria valleys. The Adventure Cycling Association breaks the route into five distinct sections: 1) Vancouver, BC to Astoria, OR (404.5-miles) ; 2) Astoria, OR to Crescent City, CA (398.5-miles); 3) Crescent City, CA to San Francisco, CA (412-miles); 4) San Francisco, CA to Santa Barbara, CA (383.1-miles); and 5) Santa Barbara, CA to Imperial Beach, CA (250.5-miles).

Section 4 of the Adventure Cycling Association Pacific Coast Route includes the North County. The defined route includes Hwy 1 from the Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo county line through the City of Guadalupe to Hwy 135. From there, the route proceeds to Lompoc via Harris Grade Road, then connects back to Hwy 1 and continues onto Hwy 101 to Gaviota.

Pacific Coast Bike Route

Caltrans, the responsible transportation agency for the State, manages the State's transportation infrastructure, including its highways and freeways. Caltrans also works with local agencies to coordinate, fund, improve, and designate pedestrian and bicycle facilities and routes. One of the most important bicycle routes designated by Caltrans in the State is the Pacific Coast Bike Route, which extends along California's coast from the California-Oregon border to San Diego. Within the County, the Pacific Coast Bike Route follows Hwy 1 road shoulder from the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo border to Hwy 101 at the Gaviota Pass. The Pacific Coast Bike Route then follows Hwy 101 south along the Gaviota Coast.



Trail Sign Concept: Portions of the proposed Backbone Route will follow the designated paths for multiple trails in the North County.



Hwy 1 South of Lompoc

Trail Issues Overview

CHAPTER **3**

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This chapter identifies potential major physical and environmental constraints on expanding on-road and off-road Coastal Trail opportunities through North County. Initial design principles to address such constraints and reduce impacts associated with potential the Coastal Trail alignment and potential future improvements are also provided. This analysis incorporates data from many sources, other studies, and field surveys performed by the Trails Council (refer to Section 1.4, *Previous Trail and Other Relevant Plans and Studies*). The design principles within this chapter and the use of standard trail design practices would ensure that implementation of the Coastal Trail alignment in this Trail Study would be consistent with the guidelines and policies of the California Coastal Conservancy, California Coastal Commission, County and other agencies regarding provision of coastal access and resource protection.

The Trail Study assesses a roughly 40-mile-long corridor for both on-road and off-road opportunities through the North County from the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo county line to Gaviota State Park and extending from the coast approximately 10 miles inland generally to Hwy 1. To refine the number of potential routes evaluated, this Trail Study focused on both on-road segments that could provide a through north-south Coastal Trail, as well as off-road routes across primarily government owned lands that could be provide opportunities for access to

and along the shoreline, consistent with the primary intent of the State Coastal Act. Because of land ownership patterns, for a through trail, this resulted in selection of a *Backbone* Route that is almost entirely an on-road or road shoulder trail that would serve primarily the road biking community, a narrow segment of the trail user population. However, a major focus was also on off-road segments that would serve a far broader range of user groups, where government owned lands were available.

In total, 21 existing on-road route segments were identified and evaluated for their feasibility to support an Interim Coastal Trail alignment, generally well inland from the coastline (refer to Section 4.2, *Routes Evaluated*). Again, because many of these segments lie along highways and other high-speed roadways, they would primarily serve experienced members of the road bike community. The need to identify additional or alternate routes that are either off-road or on lower vehicle volume and lower-speed roads with be possible with changes in land use patterns.

In addition, six off-road trail segments were evaluated for their potential to provide the public with either direct access to and along the coast, or serve as off-road segments of a through route with access to high quality natural resources and scenic beauty. This involved survey of existing trail systems to see which linkages provided for the longest possible off-road reach of the Interim Coast-



Depending on the facility, the types of trail uses can be severally limited. For instance an on-road route that utilizes existing road shoulder along high-speed roadways is generally inaccessible for hikers, equestrians, and less experienced bicyclists, while existing off-road trails at existing regional parks and open spaces such as Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve currently prohibit mountain bikers and equestrians.



al Trail, as well as considering where new trails segments may need to be constructed to provide off-road linkages for the Interim Coastal Trail. Depending on existing or potentially amended regulations, these off-road segments could serve a much broader range of user groups, including hikers, trail runners and in some cases depending on existing or amended regulatory restrictions, equestrians, mountain bikers, and dog walkers.

3.1 Natural Constraints and Opportunities

Biological Resources and Environmentally Sensitive Habitats

Setting

The North County coastline supports extensive areas of relatively intact coastal habitats. The rural coastal terrace and bluffs of the North Coast support a range of habitats dominated by both native and non-native grasslands, sandy dune complexes, coastal bluff and sage scrub, oak woodlands, and riparian woodlands. Though the coastal areas have been subject to two centuries of disturbance from cattle grazing, agricultural and oil development,

and ongoing military operations, these habitats support a wide range of sensitive species, including the western snowy plover, mountain lion, California red-legged frog, steelhead, and monarch butterflies. While intensive large-scale agricultural operations over tens of thousands of acres and urban development have altered inland area natural habitats, portions of the North County inland areas support native habitats typical of or unique to the Central Coast of California. Some designated reserves or open spaces support unique and endemic habitats which are home to dozens of plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world. Some of the most biological diverse and sensitive areas within the North County include the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park, the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, La Purisima Mission State historic Park, Gaviota State Park and Point Sal Reserve. VAFB, the Dangermond Preserve and Hollister Ranch also support important habitat areas.

Many of the habitats within these areas are considered sensitive resources protected by state and county policy. Along potential off-road segments near the coastline, the County's Local Coastal Plan (LCP) and Gaviota Coast Plan identified a total of approximately 40 designated areas of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) along the coast from Gaviota State Park to Ranch Guadalupe Dunes County Park (County of Santa Barbara 2020). ESH areas and sensitive wildlife species exist with ongoing human activi-



Many of the coastal public access locations and inland regional open spaces and parks contain sensitive biological resources, including sensitive habitat supporting special-status plant and animal species. Surf Beach is the nesting habitat for the western snowy plover (pictured right), while trails within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve (pictured left) traverse thousands acres of unique habitat found nowhere else in the world.



ty across the North County coastline such as agricultural operations, oil and gas development, and rural residential and recreational uses. Existing recreation coexists with a wide range of habitats and species; many existing coastal access points are located adjacent to creeks, which support high quality riparian woodlands and wetland habitats (e.g., Ocean Beach County Park, Jalama Beach County Park), while other locations within the North County may exist along segments of shoreline that support sensitive sand dunes and nesting habitat for western snowy plover (e.g., Surf Beach, Ocean Beach County Park, Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve).

Within the inland portions of the North County, the majority of the potential *Backbone* Trail passes through active cultivated agricultural land or grazing land that also supports natural habitats. Existing regional parks and recreational open spaces with well-established trail networks traverse through or in close proximity to designated Critical Habitat for Threatened & Endangered Species, including the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve. Designated critical habitat also exists within more heavily developed or disturbed portions of the North County along developed roadways such as Hwy 1 and Hwy 135. Generally, existing trail systems or public open spaces in or adjacent to sensitive biological resources are managed by responsible agencies to ensure recreational use of the areas and trails may coexist with sensitive biological resources.

For example, in a landmark decision made by VAFB and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in July 2020, Surf Beach which is a regular nesting spot for western snowy plover will now no longer be closed to the public during nesting season, demonstrating that balance can be achieved between managing natural resources and recreational use. Future improvements offer the opportunity to maintain and enhance recreational access while protecting environmentally sensitive habitats through appropriate siting and design to ensure compatibility of recreation and natural habitats.

Trail and Access Framework

The proposed route of Interim Coastal Trail includes both the *Backbone* on-road route and six off-road trails located in various parks and reserves. The *Backbone* Route would follow existing road shoulder or fall generally within already established off-road trail segments, with limited potential for effects on biological resources. The 15 or more miles of potential off-road segments would be located within areas considered as sensitive habitats in inland areas or ESH in Coastal Zone areas (e.g., Point Sal), but the majority of the planned off-road Coastal Trail routes would follow existing trails, although some realignment or trail connection construction and associated disturbance would be required. The *Backbone* Route would cross many creeks and two rivers using existing road shoulder along bridges



The area around Mussel Point and Mussel Rock Dunes is current privately owned, and the properties are utilized for ranching and grazing operations. However, the segment of coastline connecting across Mussel Point from the sandy beach to the north to Paradise Beach to the south provides little agricultural value.



The back-dune trail connecting Surf Beach to Ocean Beach County Park traverses through designated Environmental Sensitive Habitat, near existing western snowy plover nesting habitat, and designated critical habitat for the endangered la Graciosa thistle. Photo Source: Dan Pedersen, County of Santa Barbara, 2020.

or separated off-road paths. The proposed route would not traverse existing undeveloped/undisturbed lands, require the construction of new facilities or improvements, and would not result in the loss of sensitive habitats or ESH. Only minimal habitat within road right of way would be potentially disturbed as a result of road widening or other construction to complete the *Backbone* Trail. However, some disturbance to sensitive plant communities could occur in the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and La Purisima Mission Historic Park and limited disturbance of ESH in Coastal Zone areas may occur as a result of limited trail realignment or targeted new construction at Point Sal, Ocean Beach County and Jalama Beach County Park.

Compatibility of Trails and Sensitive Habitat

The County's certified LCP, draft Gaviota Coast Plan, and other existing regulations require protection of natural sensitive habitat areas; however, public recreation is generally a permitted use within and adjacent to sensitive habitats. For example, LCP policy 9-40 specifically permits trails within riparian corridors. The County and other agencies have planned for and built many trails, bridges and boardwalks within designated sensitive habitat areas. At Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, CDFW's Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve Land Management Plan plans for 28 miles of existing trails and roads through sensitive biological habitat and designated critical habitat areas, with trails

near or through habitat for the endangered Vandenberg monkeyflower (CDFW 2007). As discussed throughout Chapters 2 and 4 of this Trail Study, the majority of coastal access points within the North County also exist at beaches where western snowy plover nest each year, and public access is carefully managed to ensure the protection of this threatened birds and their nesting habitat.

Agriculture

Setting

Agriculture is the number one contributor to the County's economy and contributes approximately \$1.6 billion to the local economy and provides an estimated 25,370 jobs. Nearly 93 percent of the County is zoned for agricultural uses, with 673,698 acres of harvested agricultural acreage in 2019 (County of Santa Barbara 2019). North County's primary employer and industry is the agricultural sector, which provides economic and aesthetic value to communities. Much of the private land within the North County and Trail Study area is zoned for agricultural and is currently under some form of agriculture production, including row crop cultivation and grazing. The largest concentration of commercial crop producing lands are located within the Santa Maria Valley near the City of Guadalupe and the Lompoc Valley, while much of the private agricultural lands within the Casmalia, Purisima, and Lompoc Hills utilized primarily for grazing. Private agricultural land extending south of the City of Lompoc to the Gaviota Coast consists of large parcels and are utilized for ranching operations, orchards, and vineyards. Agricultural is less concentrated in the large parcels zoned for agricultural along the coast. Agricultural use is primarily limited to five privately owned parcels between Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve and Point Sal totalling 4,873.5 acres, and the 14,500 acres of Hollister Ranch west of Gaviota State Park.

Trail Access and Framework

The recommended Interim Coastal Trail route would traverse public right-of-way along existing established road shoulders, off-road hiking trails and bike paths, or shoreline. The proposed *Backbone* Trail would follow existing



road rights-of-way which are generally fenced. Off-road segments would generally follow or established trails and be located in areas that do not include active agricultural production such as Guadalupe Dunes, Point Sal or Ocean Beach. Where on-road routes are proposed in the vicinity of active agricultural operations such as Hwy 1 near the City of Guadalupe, the route would not remove or interfere with existing agricultural land uses as it would be confined to the right of way. The proposed on-road route would not traverse existing undeveloped/undisturbed lands, require the construction of new facilities or improvements, and would not result in the encroachment or loss of agricultural lands. However, a small portion of a potential future off-route segment if constructed would link existing/ planned Coastal Trail segments between Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve and Point Sal (see Chapter 4). Although, not formally proposed as part of this Study, this potential future connection would traverse an approximately 0.5-mile-long segment of Mussel Rock that is currently under private ownership and which may be utilized for grazing operations. Existing Coastal Trail users regularly traverse Mussel Rock to reach Paradise Beach from Guadalupe Dunes Beach and this area is crossed by a network of informal trails. Formal designation of Coastal

Trail segments in these areas may incrementally increase the number trail users crossing Mussel Rock, even if the trail is not formally designated across this private land. The County, Coastal Conservancy and the Dunes Collaborative are working to resolve these issues with the property owners, since many hikers of the Coastal Trail in this area do currently traverse private land at Mussel Point to access Paradise Beach and Point Sal from the north. If the Coastal Trail is ultimately designated across Mussel Point state and local agencies would need to either purchase the land or an easement.

Cultural Resources

Setting

Cultural resources in North County include varied historic structures, archaeological, and paleontological resources from early "Paleoindian" habitation of the Chumash, Spanish, Mexican, and American cultural epochs (County of Santa Barbara 2017). While there is variance between historic Chumash practices of those living in the coastal area and interior of the North County, broad patterns of cultural change are applicable to all areas. The majority of archaeologically sensitive mapped areas of the County



Photo: Mark Douglas

The Misión La Purísima Concepción de María Santísima was constructed in 1787 and restored in the 1900's after the mission was partially destroyed by an earthquake in 1812. The mission is designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark and California Historic Landmark. A California State Park, La Purísima Mission State Historic Park holds significant historical value as the most restored mission in California.



lie in the Coastal Zone due to the extent of Barbareño Chumash use of the coastline for over 9,000 years (City of Santa Barbara 2019). The Trail Study's preferred trail alignment lies largely outside of the Coastal Zone due to lack of established public trails, private land ownership, and the VAFB; however, there are several segments of existing shoreline, parkland, or off-road trails along the coast where segments or spurs of the Coastal Trail have been recommended and where sensitive cultural resources may be present.

Santa Maria Valley Region

Settlers arrived in the Santa Maria Valley in the late 19th century to utilize the area's prime soils and establish the region as an agricultural intensive area. At the time, the Santa Maria Valley was occupied by the Purisimeño Chumash, who had lower population densities and greater seasonal mobility than coastal Chumash groups (City of Santa Maria 2018). The City of Guadalupe was established in the 1840s under a Mexican land grant. The City's name honors Our Lady of Guadalupe (a title given to the Virgin Mary) (County of Santa Barbara 2017). The nearby City of Santa Maria was also established after agriculturalists banded together to donate land at the intersection of their properties in 1875. By the 1900s, Santa Maria Valley was one of the most productive agricultural regions in the state. Oil exploration in the Santa Maria Valley began in 1888, and in 1901 William Orcutt introduced Union Oil in the area. Oil development increased and intensified throughout the 1900s and became a significant economic and organizing force for the region.

Lompoc Valley Region

European settlement of the Santa Rita Hills and Lompoc Valley began in 1787 after the establishment of the La Purísima Mission (located on La Purísima Mission State Historic Park). La Purísima Mission State Historic Park holds significant historical value as the most restored mission in California and contains nearly 2,000 acres open to the public. Ten of the original structures of La Purísima Mission are restored on-site.

In 1874, the Lompoc Land Company established a temperance colony along the Coast Line stagecoach route

between the Cities of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara, causing the incorporation of the City of Lompoc in 1888. The introduction of the coastal railroad between San Francisco and Los Angeles, with a subsequent Lompoc extension in 1901 facilitated the growth of the valley and expansion of agricultural production. In 1901, mining of diatomaceous earth began and became a major employer. Agriculture and mining continue to be the major industries in Lompoc Valley.

Trail Access and Framework

Designation of the recommended Interim Coastal Trail route though the North County has the potential to lead to disturbance of cultural resources through indirect disturbance via future Coastal Trail user groups where sensitive resources are known to or may be present. For instance, at Point Sal Reserve, during preparation of the 1991 Management Plan, a large number of cultural resources sites and unprecedented site density were found within the Point Sal Reserve area (County of Santa Barbara 2002). In total, 87 separate resource locations and 14 archaeological sites were identified within the Management Plan area (County of Santa Barbara 2002). However, the Interim Coastal Trail would not result in the direct loss or disturbance of such resources, as the route is proposed to utilize existing developed road shoulder or off-road trail segments and shoreline and no construction of new facilities or amenities would be required. Improvement, realignment, or development of existing and new trails within the coastal areas where off-road segments of the Interim Coastal Trail have been identified would be subject to detailed review of existing cultural resources, as well as environmental review and assessment of impacts to resources as a result of construction of such improvements.

With regard to known historic structures, no historic structures lie within or would be damaged by designation of the Interim Coastal Trail route. As mentioned above, the route is proposed to use existing developed road shoulder or off-road trail segments and shoreline and no construction of new facilities or amenities would be required. At potential off-road connector trail sites, such as La Purísima Mission State Historic Park, the use of existing



trails would limit or prevent impacts to historic structures and features associated with the mission. Although significant archaeological and historical resources remain in North County, the proposed Interim Coastal Trail alignment would not conflict with cultural resource protection.

3.2 Man-Made Constraints and Opportunities

Road Right-of-Way

Within the North County, major highways and roads include a varying degree of road shoulder which can be accessed and traversed by cyclists and hikers, however, in some locations, road shoulder can be constrained or the condition of the road shoulder can present challenges to travel by pedestrians and cyclists. Such instances include Hwy 1 south of the City of Guadalupe, where the paved road shoulder may extend as little as 1 foot outside the travel lanes. Coupled with the speed limit along Hwy 1 in this area, the large trucks and farm vehicles that frequently utilize the road and shoulder conditions, traveling along this road shoulder can be uncomfortable for traveling hikers and cyclists. Similar cases of road shoulder constraints extend to other portions of Hwy 1 and Hwy 135 within the Trail Study area, as well as other major County roads providing north-south connections through the region. Alternatively, in many other locations, more adequate road shoulders exist and offer pedestrians and cyclists a safe route of travel through the North County. One such case includes Hwy 1 south of the City of Lompoc, where paved road shoulder may extend as much as 10 feet beyond the travel lanes.

Despite the varying degree of road shoulder that exists along these roadways, a review of Strava heatmap data demonstrates that cyclists are highly active within the area, and road cyclists utilize nearly all roads within the region. Though cyclists are capable of using road shoulder along nearly all of the major highways and roads within the Trail Study area, road shoulder within the region



Travel along high-speed roadways or highways remains a major constraint to travel for many pedestrians, equestrians, and less experienced cyclists within the North County. However, there exist some roadways or segments of roadway or highway that provide wider and more comfortable width of road shoulder that can be utilized by at least pedestrians and cyclists, such as this segment of Hwy 101 through Gaviota Pass.

continues to constrain or effectively prohibit access for pedestrians and equestrians, and provides little opportunities for these uses which constitute the largest groups of users of the Coastal Trail.

Existing Trail Segments

As mentioned earlier in this Trail Study, proposed off-road segments of the Coastal Trail would be available along approximately 15 miles within the North County. Off-road trail segments that would support public access to and along the shoreline are available in Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, Point Sal Reserve, Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park, Ken Adams Park, Riverbend Park/River Park multi-use path, and Gaviota State Park. Ocean Beach County Park, Surf Beach, and Jalama Beach County Park offer highly scenic opportunities for public access to and along the coast. These segments would provide high value reaches of north-south access along the coast within the constraints of private property and restricted federal land north and south at each of these locations.

Though some existing regional parks, open spaces, or off-road trail networks offer opportunities for through north-south access, several of these locations may limit



the types of uses along existing established trails (e.g., no mountain biking, dog walking, or equestrians), which may be a major constraint for existing and future users of the Coastal Trail. Such cases include the California State Parks universal ban on dogs at nearly all beach parks managed by the California State Parks, or CDFW's prohibition of mountain bikers and equestrians on the nearly 28 miles of existing trails within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve. Where existing coastal access exists in tandem with sensitive natural habitat, such as western snowy plover nesting habitat, dogs may also be prohibited (e.g., Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve). Limitations to the extent of existing trail segments within the North County and types of uses allowed within these areas present notable constraints to existing and future users of the Coastal Trail.

Proximity to Local Amenities, Lodging, and Goods and Services

Much of the existing established Coastal Trail elsewhere in the state benefits from the fact that segments of the trail are located through or near existing developed coastal communities where amenities (e.g., restrooms, stores, bike repair stations or shops, lodging, and other goods and services) are readily available. Within the North County, amenities can be few and far between. Generally, such amenities are limited to urban centers, developed rural communities, or in limited cases, existing parks. These include the following urban centers and parks: Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, City of Guadalupe, City of Santa Maria, community of Betteravia, community of Orcutt, community of Casmalia, community of Vandenberg Village, City of Lompoc, Ocean Beach County Park, Surf Beach, Jalama Beach County Park, and Gaviota State Park. Generally, the distance between these

Coastal Access and Trailhead Parking

As discussed above, coastal access and off-road recreational trails are limited within the North County. With regard to coastal access parking, opportunities existing at the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, Ocean Beach County Park, Surf Beach, Jalama Beach County Park, and Gaviota State Park; however, vehicle parking/day use fees are implemented at Jalama Beach County Park and Gav-

Existing Amenities Available within the North County

City of Guadalupe: Public restrooms, restaurants, overnight accommodations, stores, gas stations, and train station.

City of Santa Maria: Public restrooms, restaurants, overnight accommodations, stores, gas stations, bike repair and bike shops, and Amtrak train station.

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve: Public restrooms.

Community of Betteravia: Public restrooms, restaurant, and stores.

Community of Orcutt: Public restrooms, restaurants, overnight accommodations, stores, and gas stations.

Community of Casmalia: Public restrooms, restaurant, and stores.

Community of Vandenberg Village: Public restrooms, restaurants, overnight accommodations, and stores.

City of Lompoc: Public restrooms, restaurants, overnight accommodations, stores, bike repair stations and bike stores.

Ocean Beach County Park: Public restroom.

Surf Beach: Public restroom, and Amtrak train station.

Jalama Beach County Park: Public restrooms, restaurant, overnight accommodations, and store.

Gaviota State Park: Public restrooms, overnight accommodations, and store.

iota State Park. To access existing regional trails such as Point Sal Reserve, Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, La Purisima Mission State Park, and Gaviota State Park, parking for hikers, dog walkers, and cyclists is abundantly available at these locations. Parking for the Point Sal Reserve is available at the designated trailhead at Point Sal Road and Brown Road. Parking for Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve is available along residential streets and off-street within the Vandenberg Village, Mission Hills, and Mesa Rock communities. At La Purisima Mission State Historic Park, trail users may pay a day use fee at the main park entrance, or park for free at the north side of the park where trails are present at the Mission Hills Community Services or off-street in the residential area of Mission



Hills. Gaviota State Park offers free parking for trail users at the terminus of San Julian Road near Vista de las Cruces School or at the Gaviota Hot Springs Trailhead across Hwy 101. However, for equestrians, parking is severely limited within the North County, and parking for trailers exists only where equestrians are permitted at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park within the main parking lot near the interpretive center, or at several locations within Gaviota State Park off San Julian Road or at the Gaviota Hot Springs trailhead.



Flanked By a Multi-Use Trail, Santa Ynez River Flows Through River Park in Lompoc



Jalama Beach

Interim Trail Alignment Identification

CHAPTER **4**

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4.1 Methodology

General Approach to Methodology

The evaluation and identification of an alignment for the Interim Coastal Trail through the North County involved both field work and review of relevant background documents (refer to Chapter 1). Trails Council staff also drew upon multiple past visitations to the Point Sal Reserve and Guadalupe Dunes County Park and extensive trail maintenance and reconstruction work at Gaviota State Park.

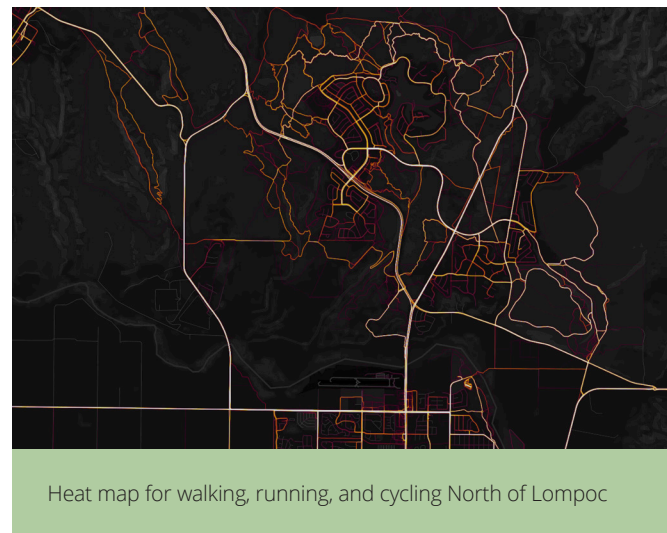
Trails Council staff conducted a total of eight days of field work by driving, walking, and hiking the possible route segments. This included three full days on May 14th,

As part of this study, the Trails Council conducted a total of eight days of field work and extensive background research and analysis of 21 potential Interim Coastal Trail on-road segments, as well as spurs or parallel off-road trail segments.

2019, April 25th, 2019, and January 11th, 2020 reviewing overall trail route options. In addition, Trails Council staff spent portions of two days exploring trails around Hancock College Lompoc Valley Center on January 12th, 2020 and trail routes in the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve adjacent to Vandenberg Village and Providence Landing on February 10th, 2020. As part of this fieldwork, Trails Council staff also drove potential on-road routes, including U.S. Highway 1 (Hwy 1), Black Road, West Lompoc-Casmalia Road, W. San Antonio Road, U.S. Highway 135 (Hwy 135), and Harris Grade Road. Two additional days were spent verifying field conditions along the preferred route.

During on road investigations, Trails Council staff interviewed a dozen cyclists regarding route preferences and conducted online research on information on preferred bike routes, including review of Strava heat maps.¹ Trails Council staff also investigated off-road routes in Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park, Point Sal State Beach and

¹Strava heatmaps show the “heat” or concentration of travel made by aggregated, public activities such as cycling, hiking, or walking. Strava heatmaps depict travel data collected by users of the Strava application over a period of two years, and is updated monthly.



Point Sal Reserve, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park, the Burton Mesa Ecological Preserve, Allen Hancock College’s Lompoc Valley Center campus, Ken Adams Park, Riverbend Park, Jalama Beach County Park, and Gaviota State Park.

During field reconnaissance, Trails Council staff noted roadway, road shoulder, and off-road conditions, and collected photographs and field notes of route conditions. Trails Council staff also conducted in-depth review of existing studies, aerial photography (e.g., Google Earth), existing trail and road right of way maps, and plans to identify potential constraints to planning for the Interim Coastal Trail along these routes. Trails Council staff reviewed databases for land ownership, sensitive habitats, cultural resources, agriculture, transportation and parking, prior bicycle and pedestrian accidents, and hazards such as flooding and erosion. These data and previous field work were utilized to conduct Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis of each route segment to provide a thorough understanding of all identified alignments, including coastal access spurs and parallel off-road routes. This analysis was undertaken to provide quantitative and qualitative information about the existing condition and potential opportunities along potential trail segments that could enhance trail amenities for public use and overall enjoyment of the interim Coastal Trail. This information is intended to help the public, agencies, and decision-makers determine the relative merits of various potential alignment options and to facilitate consen-



sus on the final alignment for the Interim Coastal Trail.

The Trails Council also conducted public outreach to ensure that interested members of the public had the opportunity to share their opinions on the interim trail alignment options. These efforts involved the establishment of an Advisory Committee consisting of responsible agencies, recreation advocacy groups, and property owners to gather feedback on identification of the interim trail alignment and goals and policies for implementation of the trail alignment through a series of meetings (three in total) in 2019 and 2020.

Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis

Utilizing a base map, background information, and data gathered in the field, 27 potential Interim Coastal Trail on-road (21) and off-road (6) segments, as well as spur routes connecting to the coast, were thoroughly evaluated using SWOT analysis. This analysis included natural and man-made constraints and opportunities cited above as well as trail or road surface conditions. Additionally, as directed by SBCAG, in order to strictly respect security requirements for Vandenberg Air Force Base as well as private property rights, detailed analysis of any routes through VAFB other than public roadways or private ranch lands was not undertaken. However, potential opportunities in such areas are discussed based upon existing adopted



Based on 14 factors under the general headings of design, function, and desirability, the Point Sal Area trails received top marks in the SWOT analysis. Together, the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park and Point Sal complex provide trail users with almost 7 miles of off-road trail experience along some of the most scenic and isolated coastline in Southern and Central California.

The following definitions were utilized for the **SWOT** analysis:

Strengths: The trail alignment relative advantages.

Weaknesses: Issues or characteristics that limit or constrain the alignment quality unless they are eliminated or minimized.

Opportunities: Conditions that if capitalized on contribute to improvement or progress in achieving trail objectives.

Threats: External factors or trends that, if realized, can threaten the trail alignment or lead to a decline in conditions.



alignment.² The complete SWOT analysis of the possible segments is provided in Appendix B. Each identified route segment was also evaluated based upon the following criteria:

1. Trail Design and Feasibility

- **Low Cost:** Alignments with lower construction costs are preferred, although high priority trail routes in desirable areas may require some higher cost improvements.
- **On Government-Owned Land or Within Existing Rights of Way:** Alignments with fewer easements to acquire are generally preferable and more feasible to build, but desirable segments that require long term acquisition of new easements are discussed.
- **Low Environmental Impact:** Alignments with a lower environmental impact are generally preferable and more feasible to build, although construction of desirable routes may require some impact and associated mitigation.

2. Function

- **High Connectivity:** Alignments which more directly connect to existing and/or proposed multi-use paths are preferable.
- **Vehicular Separation:** Alignments that provide physical separation between path users and vehicles are preferable.
- **Coastal Access:** Alignments that provide access to the ocean from the most points and for most people are preferable.
- **Local Access:** Alignments that provide access to places of interest for the majority of trail user groups are preferable.
- **Maximum User Group Accommodation:** Alignments that can accommodate the broadest range of user groups are preferred over those that meet the needs of fewer groups.

² At Point Sal, long term established public coastal access exists across federal land within VAFB to Point Sal State Beach and the County's Point Sal Reserve. In 2019, the County, State and VAFB agreed to cooperate on a Proposition 68 Grant to investigate and potentially develop more formal access improvements in this area. In addition, recent agreement by VAFB to pursue a boardwalk between Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach is also addressed, along with what is known of pending access planning at Hollister Ranch and Dangermond Preserve.



Equestrians are active in their support for new trails and access to existing trails in the North County.

3. Desirability

- **Proximity to the Coast and Improved Coastal Access:** Where possible, alignments should be within the sights and sounds of the Pacific Ocean.
- **User Experience:** Alignments that provide an enjoyable user experience such as exposure to natural resources are more desirable.
- **View Shed:** Alignments that provide scenic vistas or travel through scenic areas and natural lands are more desirable.
- **Amenities:** Alignments with access to an array of facilities and services are more desirable.
- **Elevation Change:** Alignments that provide moderate grade changes in either direction are more desirable.
- **Low Stress:** Alignments that minimize exposure to vehicular traffic and other hazards are more desirable.

Based upon how effective the segment is in addressing the above criteria, the segment was assigned a final rating of low, moderate, or high. The results of this evaluation are summarized in Tables 6 and 7 below. However, as discussed in Chapter 1 and throughout this study, land ownership constraints, and in some cases existing regulations, present challenges in meeting many of the route evaluation criteria and goals or in meeting the needs of a majority of trail user groups.



A dramatic increase in the popularity of spending time in nature has taken place during the coronavirus pandemic.

Data Collection and Mapping

In order to narrow down potential alignments for study, the SWOT analysis process began with a base map developed in ArcGIS. Information gathered from a review of plans and studies, existing aeriels, and topographic mapping, field surveys and agency input helped shape the selection and analysis of potential trail route segments.

Table 3. Inventory of Data Collected for Each Existing Segment

Data Point	Description
Location	A brief description of where the information was collected
Trail Type	General name for types of route – could be more than one
Segment Status	Existing route or proposed route – could be more than one
Jurisdiction	Name of agency managing the alignment
Distance of Trail	Identified if alignment is part of long-distance trails (i.e., Anza Trail, Pacific Coast Bike Route)
Use	Typical trail uses (i.e., hiking, cycling, equestrians)
Surface Type	The type of surface or trail tread
Layout	Choices for a trail route
Trail Width	This would be the average width of existing trail or road shoulder
Level of Difficulty	While subjective, steeper grades and increased traffic indicated greater levels of difficulty
Surface Condition	A subjective review based on pavement or trail condition
Photographs	Photographs of existing conditions

Examples of resources utilized include State highway right-of-way maps, data layers from the Santa Barbara County Blueprint, California Natural Diversity Database, assessor parcel lines. Draft Master Plans for Jalama Beach County Park, the Point Sal Reserve and Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park, as well as the Land Management Plan for the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve were used to aid in off-road Interim Coastal Trail and coastal access planning.

Segments Inventory

Trails Council staff performed field surveys, which consisted of driving, hiking, photographing, reviewing maps, and documenting each of the potential alignments. The inventory included a photo documentary field survey that provided visual data on the existing alignment conditions and management that could not be obtained from a review of plans and studies. Examples of the data collected are provided in Table 3.



4.2 Routes Evaluated

The Interim Coastal Trail study corridor included a roughly 40-mile-long corridor through the North County from the Santa Barbara-San Luis Obispo county line to the southern end of Gaviota State Park and extending from the coast approximately 10-miles inland generally to Hwy 1. To refine the number of potential routes evaluated, this Study focused primarily on major transportation corridors and on-road route segments that provide through north-south access on lands under governmental control. Because of land ownership patterns, for a through trail, this resulted in selection of a route that is almost entirely an on-road or road shoulder trail that would serve primarily the road biking community, a relatively narrow segment of the trail user population.

However, where possible, off-road segments that would serve a broader range of user groups were also identified, particularly on publicly owned land. In total, 21 existing on-road route segments were identified and evaluated for their feasibility to support an interim Coastal Trail alignment (see Table 4). Again, because many of these segments lie along highways and other high-speed road-

ways, they would primarily serve experienced members of the road bike community.

In addition, six off-road trail segment locations were identified and evaluated for their potential to serve as segments of a through route or provide alternative or connector routes (see Table 5). This involved a survey of existing trail systems to see which provided linkages for the longest possible off-road reach of the Interim Coastal Trail, as well as considering where new trails segments may need to be constructed to provide linkages for the Interim Coastal Trail. Depending on existing or potentially amended regulations, these off-road segments could serve a much broader range of user groups, including hikers, trail runners and in some cases depending on existing or potentially amended regulatory restrictions, equestrians, mountain bikers and dog walkers.



Running through River Park in Lompoc, a multi-use trail parallels the Santa Ynez River and provides a recreation and transportation route for walkers, trail runners and cyclists.



Table 4. Potential On-Road Route Segments Evaluated

SWOT Segment	General Description	Jurisdiction	Route Extent	Length
1	Hwy 1 within the City of Guadalupe through downtown	Caltrans*	San Luis Obispo County line to Hwy 166	1.3 Mi
2	W Main Street through City of Guadalupe and rural County agricultural land	City of Guadalupe; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve	4.9 Mi
3	Santa Maria Levee Trail Extension	County of Santa Barbara; City of Santa Maria	Bonita School Road east of the City of Guadalupe to Bull Canyon Road west of the City of Santa Maria	3.5 Mi
4	Hwy 1 from the City of Guadalupe through rural County agricultural land	Caltrans*	Hwy 166 to Black Road	7.2 Mi
5	Brown Road	California State Parks; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to trailhead for Point Sal State Beach and Point Sal Reserve	3.5 Mi
6	Black Road, Lompoc Casmalia Road, and San Antonio Road West	County of Santa Barbara (most within VAFB)	From Hwy 1 through Casmalia to San Antonio Road West and connecting back to Hwy 1	10.8 Mi
7	Hwy 1	Caltrans* (portion within VAFB)	Hwy 1 from Black Road to SR 135	10.9 Mi
8	Orcutt roads bypassing Hwy 1 north-bound	County of Santa Barbara	Clark Avenue, Rice Avenue, Orcutt Road, and Graciosa Road bypassing the Hwy 1/ SR 135 interchange	3.2 Mi
9	Hwy 1	Caltrans* (within VAFB)	San Antonio Road West to Santa Lucia Canyon Road	5.8 Mi
10	Hwy 1, San Antonio Road East, Hwy 135, and Harris Grade Road	Caltrans*; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 from San Antonio Road West to San Antonio Road East; San Antonio Road East to Hwy 135; Hwy 1 to Harris Grade Road; Harris Grade Road to Purisima Road	12.5 Mi
11	Santa Lucia Canyon Road and Floradale Avenue	City of Lompoc; County of Santa Barbara (within VAFB)	Santa Lucia Canyon Road and Floradale Avenue from Hwy 1 to Ocean Avenue	7.6 Mi
12	Hwy 1	Caltrans* (some within VAFB); City of Lompoc	Hwy 1 from Santa Lucia Canyon Road to Lompoc North Shopping Center	4.6 Mi
13	Allan Hancock College Bike Path	City of Lompoc	Class I bike path at Allan Hancock College from Hwy 1 to City of Lompoc	1.6 Mi
14	Purisima Road	Caltrans*; City of Lompoc; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to intersection of Hwy 1 and SR 246	4.9 Mi
15	Central Avenue	City of Lompoc	Floradale Avenue to Riverbend Park bike path	5.6 Mi
16	Hwy 1 and SR 246	Caltrans* (within City of Lompoc)	Hwy 1 and SR 2467 through downtown Lompoc	3.0 Mi
17	Riverbend Bike Path	City of Lompoc	Riverbend Class I bike path from Hwy 1 to SR 246	4.2 Mi
18	Ocean Avenue	City of Lompoc; County of Santa Barbara (portion within VAFB)	Floradale Avenue to Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach	7.2 Mi
19	Jalama Road	County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to Jalama Beach County Park	14.3 Mi
20	Hwy 1	Caltrans*	Hwy 246 to Hwy 101	18.2 Mi
21	Hwy 101	Caltrans*	Hwy 1 to Gaviota State Park Beach and Campground	3.0 Mi

* requires partnerships with local and regional agencies



Table 5. Potential Off-Road Segments Evaluated

SWOT Segment	General Description	Jurisdiction	Route Extent	Length
A	Beach fronting Guadalupe Dunes	County of Santa Barbara	2.5-mile-long beach extending from Santa Maria River mouth to Mussel rock	2.5 Mi
B	Point Sal State Beach and County Point Sal Reserve	County of Santa Barbara; VAFB; California State Parks	From trailhead/parking lot at Brown Road to Point Sal State Beach- County Road (2.6-miles); VAFB road easement (2.3-miles); From trailhead/parking lot at Brown Road to Point Sal via existing ridge trail (2-miles) with access roughly 6-miles of additional existing trails within Reserve	4.9 Mi
C	Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Extensive Burton Mesa network of trails connecting from Rucker Road, across Harris Grade Road, around Vandenberg Village, and over to Hwy 1 to provide over 5-miles off-road route for the Coastal Trail; potential for connection to La Purisima State Historic Park adds over 2 more miles of off-road trails	28 Mi
D	La Purisima Mission State Historic Park	California State Parks	Front entrance of La Purisima Mission State Historic Park at Purisima Road to the Mission Hills Community Services District provides over 2-miles of an off-road route for Coastal Trail1; potential for connection to Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve adds over 5 more miles of off-road route for Coastal Trail	1.6 Mi
E	Riverbend Park and River Park	City of Lompoc	Compacted dirt and paved walking and bike trails connecting East Central Avenue in Lompoc to Hwy 246	1.8 Mi
F	Shoreline between Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park	County of Santa Barbara, Amtrak, VAFB	0.5-mile-long beach extending from Ocean Beach County Park across UPRR to Surf Beach	0.5 Mi
G	Bluff-top trail adjacent to Jalama Road	County of Santa Barbara	Jalama Beach County Park to Cojo Road and "the crack"	0.6 Mi
H	Gaviota State Park	California State Parks	Extensive network of trails connecting from Vista de Las Cruces School to Gaviota State Park Beach and Campground, Gaviota Peak, Los Padres National Forest, and planned segments of the Coastal Trail; the Ortega Trail, Overlook Fire Road Trail, and the Beach to Backcountry Trail provide a developed, off-road 3.5-mile-long route that parallels Hwy 101 and connects Gaviota State Beach parking area with San Julian Road at the Vista de Las Cruces School off of Hwy 1	10.9 Mi

Trail Rating Criteria

As noted under the discussion of the SWOT analysis in Section 4.1, Methodology above, 14 factors under the general headings of design, function and desirability went into rating trail segments; based on guidance provided by the Coastal Conservancy's Completing the California Coastal Trail, not all factors were evaluated equally. For example, provision of direct access to and along the shoreline consistent with state and local policy, accommodation

of a broad range of user groups and user experience which involves exposure to nature resources are ranked more highly than some other criteria such as low costs or connectivity. Thus, while use of an existing wide road shoulder on an inland existing high-speed roadway may be relatively simple to develop and have minimal environmental impact, it would not accommodate a wide range of user groups or provide direct access to the or along coast. Therefore, while providing part of a continuous through connection, it may not receive as high of a rating



as a natural trail that lacks through connectivity, but provides access to the coast or through undisturbed natural areas. A rating of high indicates that the route or segment meets the most important criteria, while a moderate rating indicates that the route meets most of the criteria. A low rating indicates that it does not generally meet the criteria.

SWOT Rating Criteria Notes:

High – Best meets criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

Moderate – Meets basic goals of criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

Low – Does not meets or marginally accomplishes basic goals of criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

Table 6. Potential On-Road Route Segment Criteria Rating

SWOT Segment	Trail Design	Function	Desirability	Final Rating
1	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
2	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
3	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
4	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
5	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
6	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
7	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
8	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
9	High	Low	Low	Moderate
10	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
11	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
12	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
13	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
14	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
15	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
16	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
17	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
18	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
19	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
20	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
21	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate



Table 7. Potential Off-Road Route Segment Criteria Rating

SWOT Segment	Trail Design	Function	Desirability	Final Rating
A	Low	High	High	High
B	High	High	High	High
C	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
D	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High
E	High	Low	High	High
F	High	Moderate	High	High
G	Moderate	High	High	High
H	High	High	High	High

4.3 Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Routes Between Guadalupe to Gaviota

Based upon the SWOT analysis, Advisory Committee meetings, and public outreach, a continuous on-road "backbone trail" and parallel off-road routes where available were identified. While members of the public expresses strong interest in off-road trail recreation, property ownership patterns have resulted in identification of a "backbone trail" that would be primarily an on-road route, generally suitable for use by and for the benefit of experienced members of the road bike community, an important but relatively small segment of the trail-using community. The six parallel off-road segments totaling over 49 miles in length in generally discontinuous segments would benefit a far wider range of recreational user groups and for several segments more closely meet the intent of locating the Coastal Trail within the sights and sound of the Pacific Ocean. Both on- and off-road segments would allow for the maximum opportunity for improvement of an interim alignment of the Coastal

SWOT Rating Criteria Notes:

High – Best meets criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

Moderate – Meets basic goals of criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

Low – Does not meet or marginally accomplishes basic goals of criteria for Trail Design, Function and Desirability.

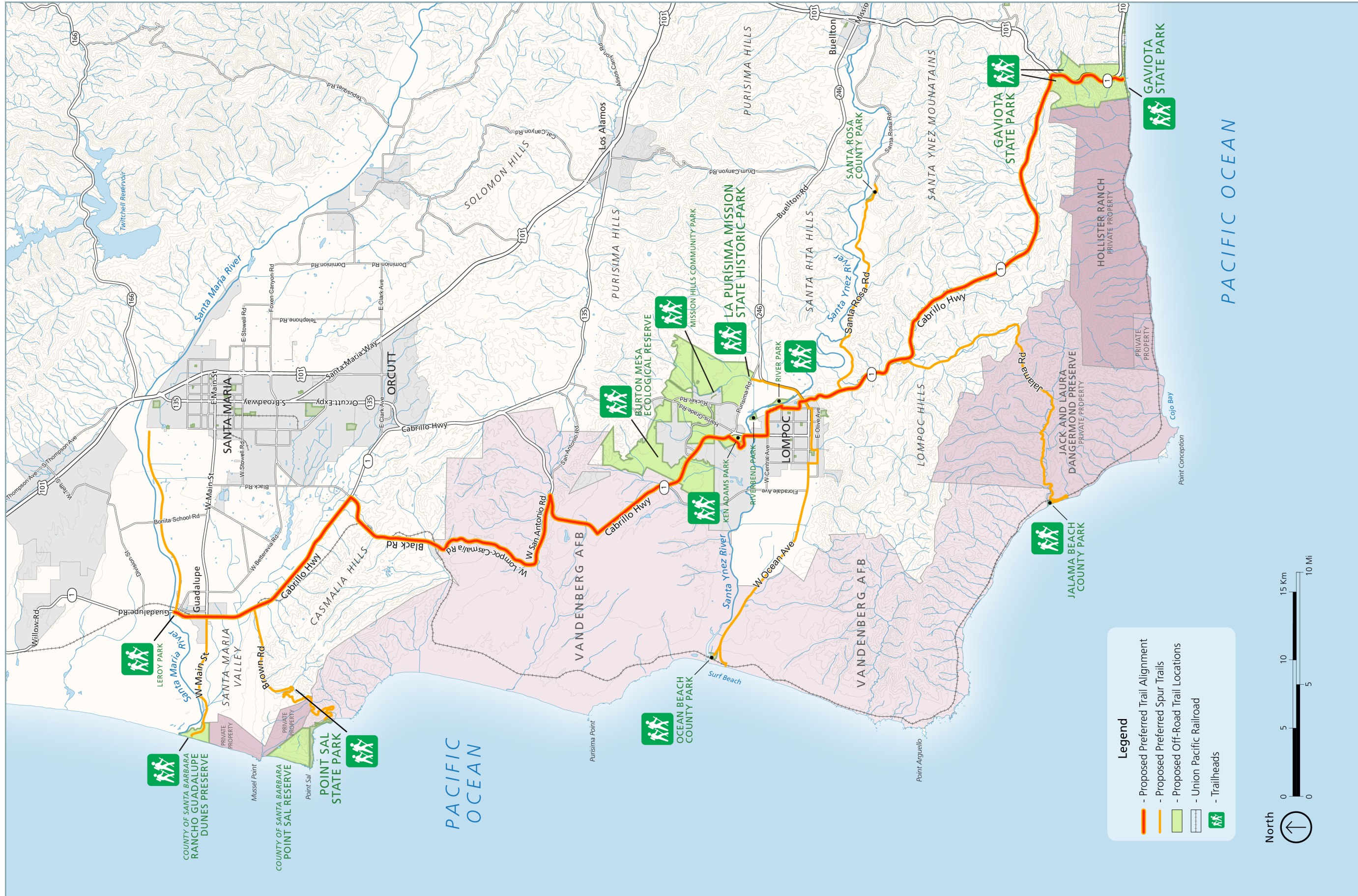
Trail through the North County. The preferred route for the *Backbone* Trail with focus areas for off-road improvements are shown on Figure 3.

Given the study's scope limitations on utilizing existing public lands and rights-of-way, the *Backbone* Trail follows existing public roads, as well as two segments of Class 1 bicycle path. Portions of the preferred *Backbone* Trail route follow the designated PCBR or the USBRS 95. In other locations, the *Backbone* Trail follows the more scenic and less traveled route along Black Road/Lompoc-Casmalia Road/San Antonio West. This route is considered superior to the PCBR and USBRS 95 routes as it provides an opportunity to avoid approximately 2.7 miles of traveling along the high-speed Hwy 1 shoulder for a section and avoids the Hwy 1/Hwy 135 interchanges, which is challenging to traverse as a non-motorized user and the possibility to improve access for all users is limited.



Table 8. Summary of the Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Backbone Alignment

SWOT Segment	Jurisdiction	Route Extent	Length
1	Caltrans*	San Luis Obispo County line to Hwy 166	1.3 Mi
4	Caltrans *	Hwy 166 to Black Road	7.2 Mi
6	County of Santa Barbara (most within VAFB)	From Hwy 1 through Casmalia to San Antonio Road West and connecting back to Hwy 1	10.8 Mi
9	Caltrans* (within VAFB)	San Antonio Road West to Santa Lucia Canyon Road	5.8 Mi
12	Caltrans* (some within VAFB) City of Lompoc	Hwy 1 from Santa Lucia Canyon Road to Allan Hancock College	3.2 Mi
13	City of Lompoc	Class I bike path at Allan Hancock College from Hwy 1 to West Central Avenue in City of Lompoc	1.6 Mi
15	City of Lompoc	East Central Avenue to Riverbend Park and River Park multi-use path	0.5 Mi
17	City of Lompoc	Riverbend Park and River Park multi-use path from Hwy 1 to SR 246 (East North Avenue, North 17th Street, East Laurel Avenue, North 12th Street)	2.1 Mi
21	Caltrans*	Hwy 1 to Hwy 101; Hwy 101 to Gaviota State Park Beach and Campground	20.8 Mi
F	California State Parks	3.5-mile-long route from Vista de Las Cruces School to Gaviota State Park Beach; the Ortega Trail, Overlook Fire Road Trail, and the Beach to Backcountry Trail	3.5 Mi
*requires partnerships with local and regional agencies			
Total Backbone Trail Length			56.8 Mi



Proposed Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail Alignment

Trails and Trailhead Locations

Figure 4



The preferred *Backbone* Trail route, parallel off-road routes, and planned improvements are described as follows from north to south:

Segment 1: Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo County Line to San Antonio Road West

- 1. Beginning at the Santa Barbara/San Luis Obispo County Line, use Hwy 1 at the Santa Maria River crossing. The Hwy 1 bridge over the Santa Maria River is funded to be widened by Caltrans and is proposed to include pedestrian access.
- 2. Continuing along Hwy 1 through the City of Guadalupe where bicycle lanes exist and the City is considering mobility plans to improve pedestrian and other alternative transportation facilities.
- 3. A key off-road segment opportunity, approximately 3.5-miles west of the City of Guadalupe, use the beach from the parking lot in Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park to proceed south 2.5-miles to Mussel Rock.³

³ Note: The feasibility of a back dune trail south from Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park to the County owned lands within the Point Sal Reserve is being investigated as part of the ongoing Santa Barbara County-wide Recreation Master Plan. Mussel Rock is private land, but beach walkers and trail users regularly walk the 2.5 miles along Guadalupe Dunes Beach to cross Mussel Rock to access Paradise Beach at County's Point Sal Reserve.

- 4. Following Hwy 1 south of Guadalupe where Caltrans is currently funded to add 5 foot wide paved shoulders along the proposed route to Black Road and eight-foot shoulders beyond to Orcutt.
- 5. Another key off-road segment opportunity, approximately 1 mile south of the City of Guadalupe and 3.5 miles west of Highway 1, from the Brown road Trailhead use the existing Point Sal Road Trail to proceed 2.64-miles south to the ridge top and west to the existing informal Point Sal Ridge Trail, then west two mile to the planned 0.3-mile- long Paradise Beach Trail across County land to Paradise Beach and then north along Paradise Beach for 1.5-miles to Mussel Rock (total off-road length 4.4-miles one way); or use existing ranch roads (proposed Jeep-way Trail) on County property to proceed north to informal County picnic area and then 0.3-miles west down informal trail across the sand dunes to paradise Beach, then north to Mussel Rock.
- 6. Turning southwest at the stop sign controlled intersection of Hwy 1 and Black Road, the route continues along Black Road/Lompoc-Casamalia Road/San Antonio Road West.

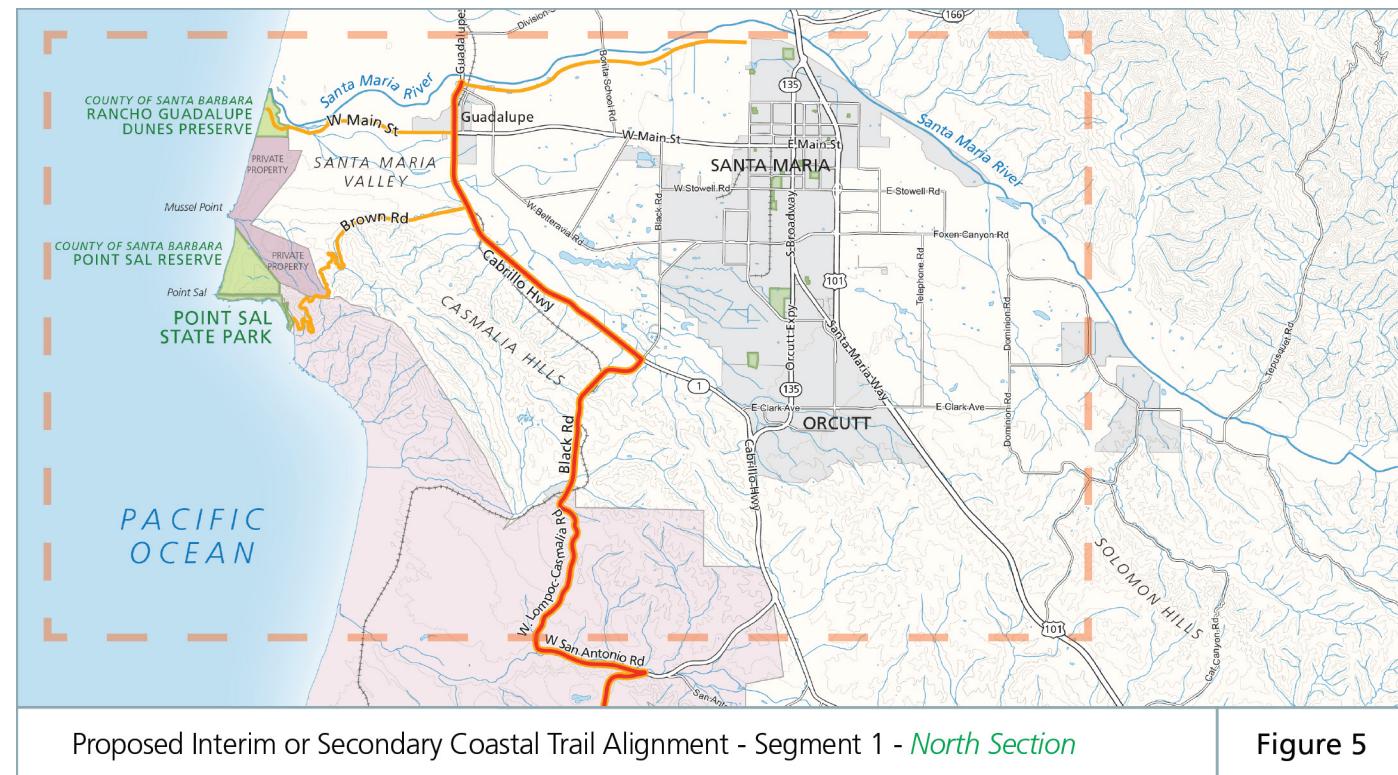


Figure 5



Segment 1 begins the first leg of the of the recommended Interim Coastal Trail transitions from Class II bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks within the City of Guadalupe (pictured left) to road shoulder along Hwy 1 through rural agricultural land south of the City of Guadalupe (pictured right). Segment 1 extends for approximately 8.5 miles .

Segment 1 of the proposed *Backbone* Trail is approximately 19.3 miles long and primarily follows existing road shoulder along Hwy 1 before turning south on to Black Road/Lompoc-Casamalia Road/ San Antonio Road West (Figure 5). This route differs from the existing defined north/south on-road bicycle routes described in Section 2.4, *Existing North/South On-Road Routes*, which follow existing road shoulder along Hwy 1 to Hwy 135 and/or Hwy 101. This segment of the *Backbone* Route provides a benefit to riders compared to these routes as it follows closer to the coast and through the more scenic Casamalia Hills. Black Road/Lompoc-Casamalia Road/San Antonio Road is a much less trafficked with lower speeds (55 miles per hour), compared to Hwy 1 and Hwy 135 (65 miles per hour) and offers wider and higher quality road shoulder. Black Road/Lompoc-Casamalia Road/San Antonio Road offers higher quality views of the Casamalia Hills, native oak woodlands, and rural grazing lands, whereas views along Hwy 1 are primarily of commercial agricultural lands.

Amenities along this segment exist only within the City of Guadalupe and community of Casamalia; however, given the smaller size of these communities and their remoteness from the primary transportation corridors (e.g., U.S. 101), amenities can be limited. Several restaurants and options for dining are present within the City of Guadalupe, along with general retail, grocery, and hardware stores. While hotel options are limited or are not avail-

able, short-term rentals and other overnight accommodations (e.g., Airbnb) are present. There is also plenty of free parking within the City and within the downtown area. An Amtrak station is also located within the downtown area, with connecting rail north to San Luis Obispo and south to Lompoc and beyond.

South of the City of Guadalupe, no amenities exist along the proposed *Backbone* Route until arriving in the community of Casamalia. Much like Guadalupe, amenities within Casamalia are limited. Dining options are limited to the Hitching Post, which operates only in the afternoon and evening hours. There is only one general store located within Casamalia and there are no overnight accommodations or lodging options available. There are no transit or rail services provided to Casamalia.

Segment 2: San Antonio Road West to Hwy 1 South of the City of Lompoc

- 7. At the San Antonio Road West/Hwy 1 intersection, the route continues southwest on the Hwy 1 on striped shoulders past the Vandenberg Air Force Base main gate and through Vandenberg Village and the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve.
- 8. A key off-road segment opportunity begins approximately ¼ mile west of Vandenberg Village where the extensive existing Burton Mesa Ecological Preserve trail system intersects with Hwy 1. This opportunity



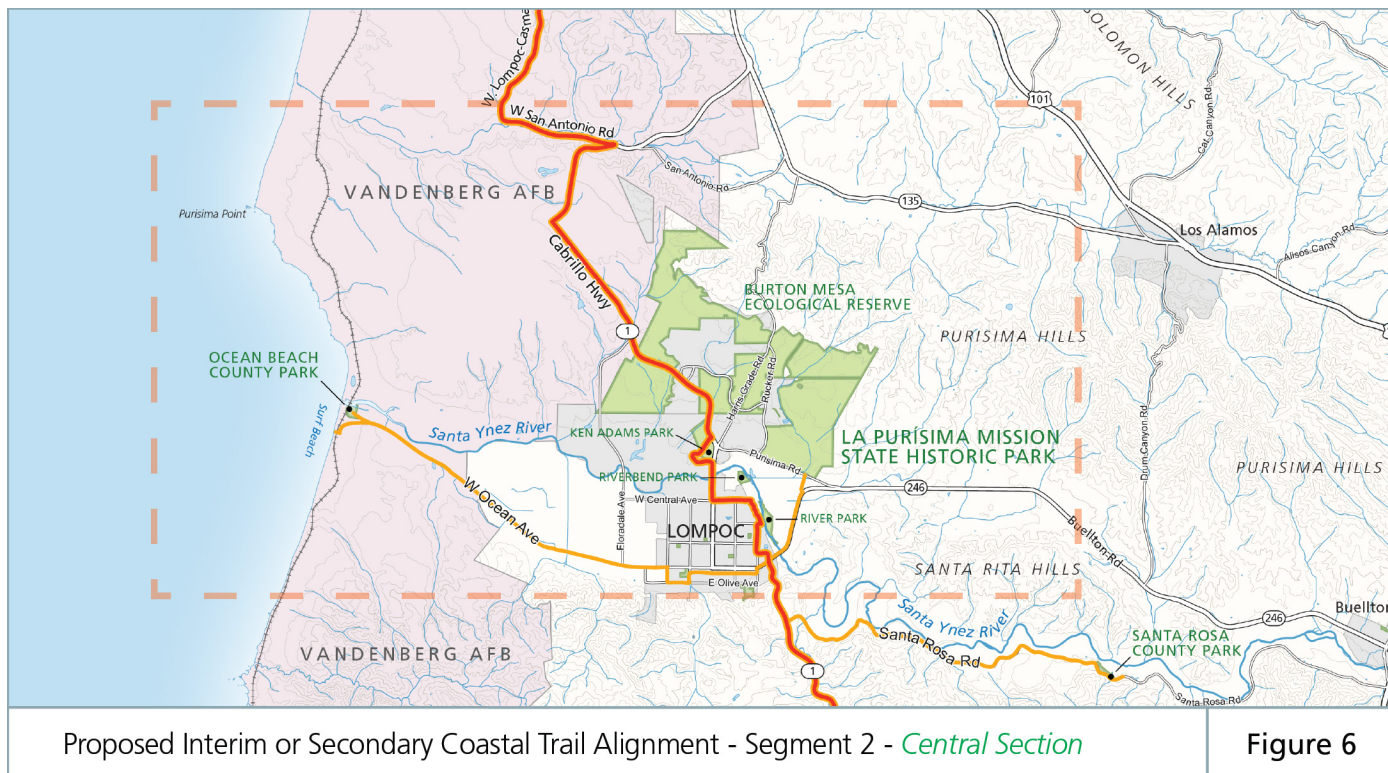
could include a loop route of up to 6 miles leading to the east around the north edge of Vandenberg Village, southeast across Harris Grade Road, then south through the eastern portion of the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve into La Purisima State Historic Park to the Visitor's Center. A possible return leg of the loop would follow existing trails north to Mission Hills, then west back across Harris Grade Road to Vandenberg Village.

- 9. This route leaves Hwy 1 at the signalized intersection entrance to Allan Hancock College and follows along a perimeter college roadway until reaching a Class I bicycle path that extends over the Santa Ynez River and into the City of Lompoc back to Hwy 1, then east on the Central Avenue Class II bicycle lanes to the River Park Class I bicycle path. Potential extensions of this off-road route for 2 miles to the south through Ken Adam Park and across the River to the City's River Park could be explored in the future if safe dry weather or low flow crossing techniques can be devised, in conjunction with the City of Lompoc.
- 10. This route leaves the Class I bicycle path and makes a series of turns onto residential streets within the City

of Lompoc as follows: west on E. North Avenue, then a quick left south onto N. 7th Street, east on E. Laurel Avenue, and finally south onto N. 12th Street.

- 11. This route then crosses U.S. Highway 246 (Hwy 246) at a signalized intersection and continues south on Hwy 1 striped shoulders out of the City of Lompoc.

Segment 2 of the proposed *Backbone* Trail is approximately 16.5 miles long and follows a mix of existing road shoulder along Hwy 1, less-trafficked collector roads, and established Class I and Class II bike paths through the City of Lompoc (Figure 6). Similar to Segment 1 of the proposed *Backbone* Trail, this proposed route differs from the existing defined north/south on-road bicycle routes described in Section 2.4, *Existing North/South On-Road Routes*, which follow existing road shoulder along Hwy 1 to Hwy 135 and/or Hwy 101. This segment of the *Backbone* Route provides a benefit to riders compared to these routes as it primarily follows lower traffic roadways and existing Class I and Class II before leading into the City of Lompoc, where rest stops and other amenities are more abundant. Routing along Class I bike paths within the City of Lompoc also removes cyclists from the



Segment 2 of the recommended Interim Coastal Trail would follow road shoulder along the lower-speed and highly scenic Black Road through the unincorporated community of Casmalia, a valuable rest stop opportunity along this 24.5-mile-long segment. The segment ultimately reconnects with Hwy 1 and leads into the City of Lompoc along a mix of highway road shoulder, city streets, and separated off-road bike paths.

roadway, reducing traffic safety risks. The route also supports safer travel for backpackers or trail walkers along the bike paths and the city's expansive sidewalk network. In addition, Segment 2 of the proposed *Backbone* Route offers a greater degree of connection to other regional parks, open spaces, walking paths, and trails. Such features include the expansive network of hiking and equestrian trails within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve, Ken Adam Park, River Bend Park, and River Park.

As mentioned above, amenities along this segment are abundant within the City of Lompoc. Being one of the few incorporated cities along the *Backbone* Route, rest stops, opportunities for shopping, and other amenities are located throughout the city and are easily accessible via the city's pedestrian, bicycling, and roadway network. Several bike shops and self-service bicycle repair stations are also located within the city.

Segment 3: Hwy 1 South of the City of Lompoc to Gaviota State Park

- 12. Continuing to Gaviota State Park at U.S. Highway 101 (Hwy 101), bicyclists would utilize Hwy 101, while pedestrians/equestrians/mountain bikers would utilize off-road dirt trails within Gaviota State Park to access the coast.
- 13. A parallel off-road route to accommodate the Coastal Trail is available for 4.1 miles through Gaviota State

Park between Las Cruces and the Gaviota State Beach parking lot. The route would traverse the Beach to Back Country Trail for 1.7 miles, the Overlook Fire Road Trail for 1.7 miles and the Ortega Trail for 0.7 miles.

Segment 3 of the proposed *Backbone* Trail is approximately 20.5 miles long and follows existing road shoulder along Hwy 1 between the City of Lompoc to the Vista de Las Cruces School located at the Hwy 101 interchange north of Gaviota State Park. At the Hwy 1/Hwy 101 interchange, road bicyclists would continue along Hwy 101 through the Gaviota Pass to the coast, while pedestrians and equestrians would utilize existing off-road trails off San Julian Road near the Vista de Las Cruces School to navigate Gaviota State Park to Gaviota Beach (Figure 8). For the on-road portion of Segment 3, this proposed route would match the north/south on-road bicycle routes described in Section 2.4, *Existing North/South On-Road Routes*, which follow existing road shoulder along Hwy 1 and Hwy 101. This segment of the backbone route offers both a through on-road route for cyclists, as well as off-road trails for hikers and equestrians. The proposed route terminates at Gaviota State Park.

Where the preferred parallel off-road route is proposed through Gaviota State Park, it follows existing multi-use trails providing increased opportunities for hikers, backpackers, off-road bicyclists, and equestrians. This segment

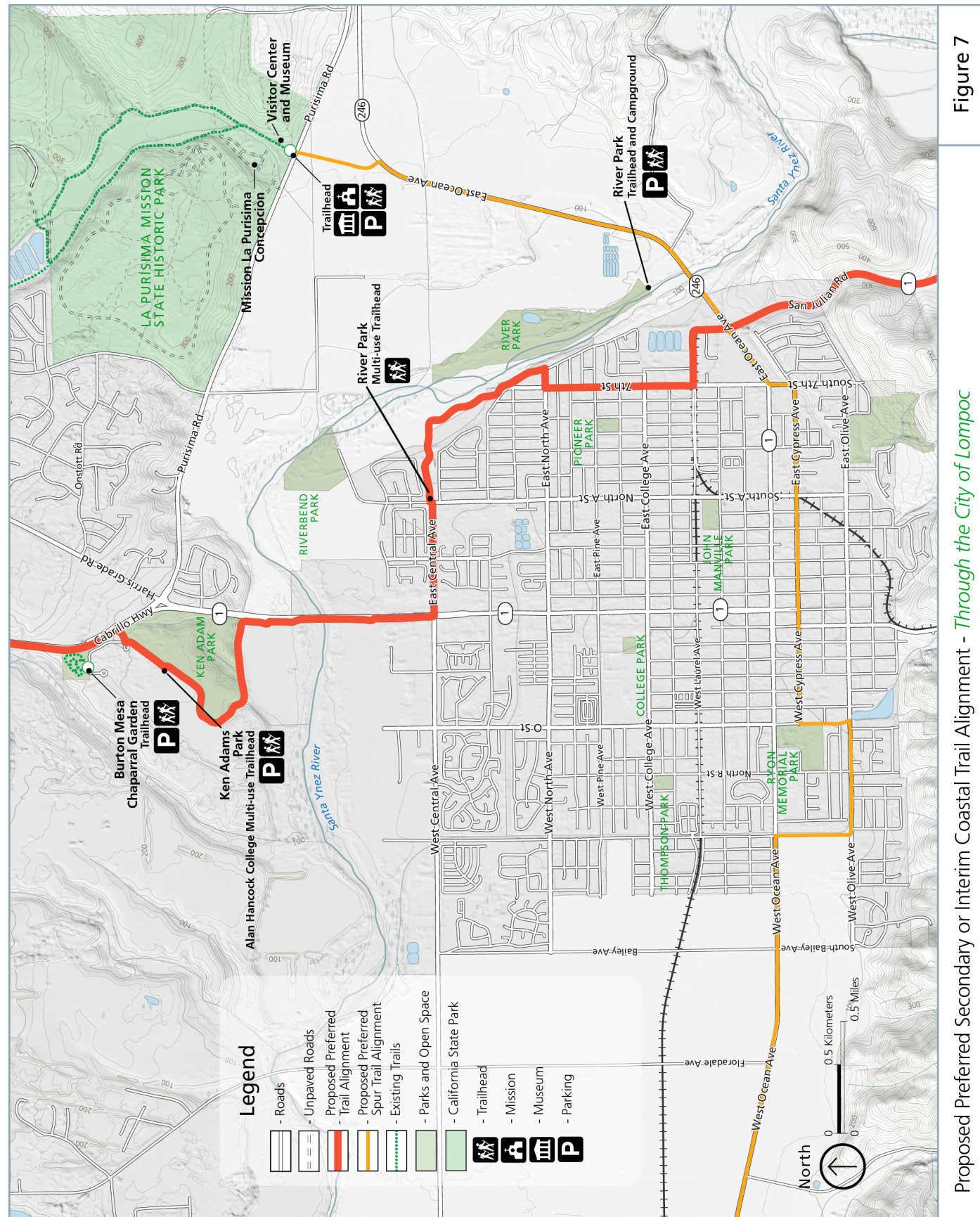


Figure 7

Proposed Preferred Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail Alignment - *Through the City of Lompoc*

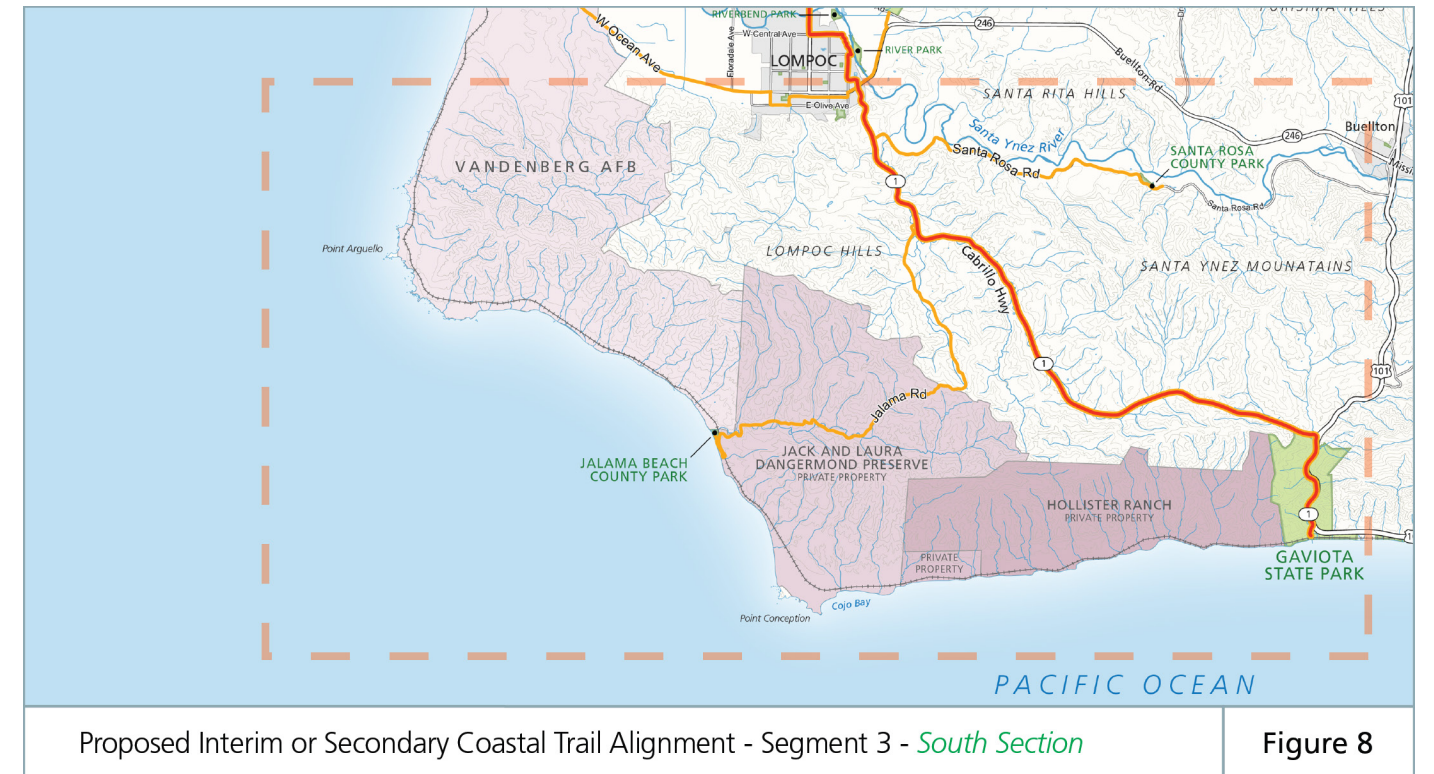
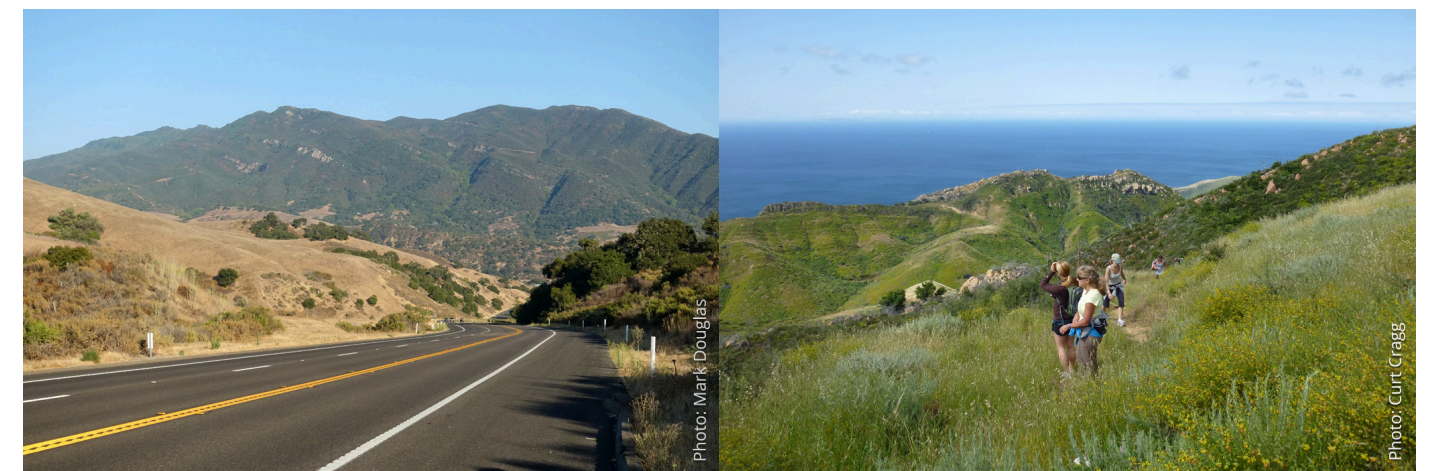


Figure 8

supports an existing off-road element of the Coastal Trail through the Gaviota State Park for 4.1 miles between La Cruces in the North and the State Beach parking lot in the south through one of the largest natural open space areas along the 40-mile-long *Interim North County Coastal Trail* (Figure 13). This off-road Coastal Trail route includes scenic trail segments with sweeping ocean views, season-

al wildflower blooms and wildlife viewing of deer, coyotes, raptors, bobcats, mountain lions and southern steelhead trout spawning in Gaviota Creek. Using Gaviota State Park to accommodate the Coastal Trail would be consistent with Coastal Conservancy's *Completing the California Coastal Trail* which states: "Create linkages to other trail systems and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coast-



Segment 3 of the recommended Interim Coastal Trail would follow road shoulder along the highly scenic Hwy 1 south of Lompoc for 17.8 miles to the interchange with Hwy 101 (pictured left). The route would then split into two parallel routes: one on-road route along Hwy 101 to the Gaviota Coast, and one off-road route along existing hiking trails (pictured right) within Gaviota State Park that would bring hikers and off-road riders to Gaviota State Park beach and campground.



Table 9. Summary of the Recommended Off-Road Routes

SWOT Segment	Jurisdiction	Route Extent	Length
A	County of Santa Barbara	2.5-mile-long beach extending from Santa Maria River mouth to Mussel rock	2.5 Mi
B	County of Santa Barbara; VAFB; California State Parks	From trailhead/parking lot at Brown Road to Point Sal State Beach-County Road (2.6 miles); VAFB road easement (2.3 miles); From trailhead/parking lot at Brown Road to Point Sal via existing ridge trail (2 miles) with access roughly 6 miles of additional existing trails within Reserve	4.9 Mi
C	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Trails connecting from Rucker road to points around Vandenberg Village, Harris Grade Road, and Hwy; connection to La Purisma State Historic Park	28.0 Mi
D	California State Parks	La Purisma Mission State Historic Park at Purisima Road to the Mission Hills Community Services District; connection to Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve	1.6 Mi
E	City of Lompoc	Trails connecting East Central Avenue in Lompoc to Hwy 246	1.8 Mi
Total Off-Road Trail Length			38.8

al Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers." Minimal improvements would be required.

There are no amenities along this route, with the exception of restroom facilities and a small store located at Gaviota State Park beach and campground. Gaviota State Park beach and campground offers direct coastal access and low-cost overnight accommodations in the form of tent camping, hike/bike camping, and RV camping.

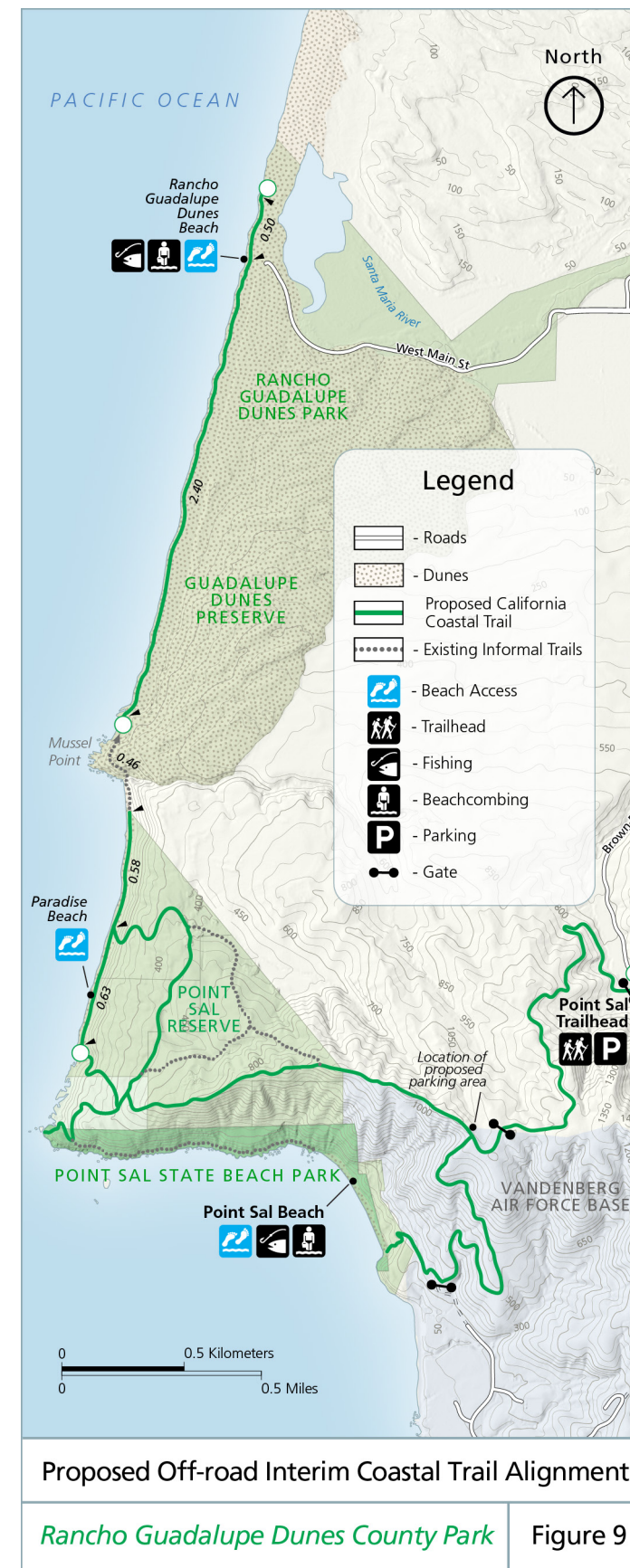
4.4 Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Off-Road Routes

This Trail Study acknowledges limitations in the ability to designate true off-road or coastal segments of the Coastal Trail due to existing constraints primarily associated with private landownership. Nevertheless, through this analysis, the following opportunities for designation of portions of coastal trails which align with the goals and

policies of the Coastal Conservancy, California Coastal Act, and County of Santa Barbara LCP, or potentially more favorable off-road trail network connections were identified and are recommended to be officially designated as segments of the Coastal Trail.

Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park and Point Sal Reserve

This recommended route supports two key near-shore elements of the Coastal Trail and coastal access points at Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park (Figure 9) and Point Sal (Figure 10), the only two coastal access points that serve more than 150,000 residents of the Santa Maria Valley. Together, the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park and Point Sal complex protect over 1,700 acres of public open space and provide trail users with almost 7 miles of off-road trail experience along some of the most scenic and isolated coastline in Southern and Central California. This includes scenic trail segments with seasonal wildflower blooms and expansive views and wildlife viewing of deer, coyotes, raptors such as the peregrine falcon, and the occasional mountain lion. Wildland beaches offer access to large surf, swimming, sand dunes, spectacular wildlife viewing of whales, otters, sea lions and sea elephants and a myriad of shore and water birds.



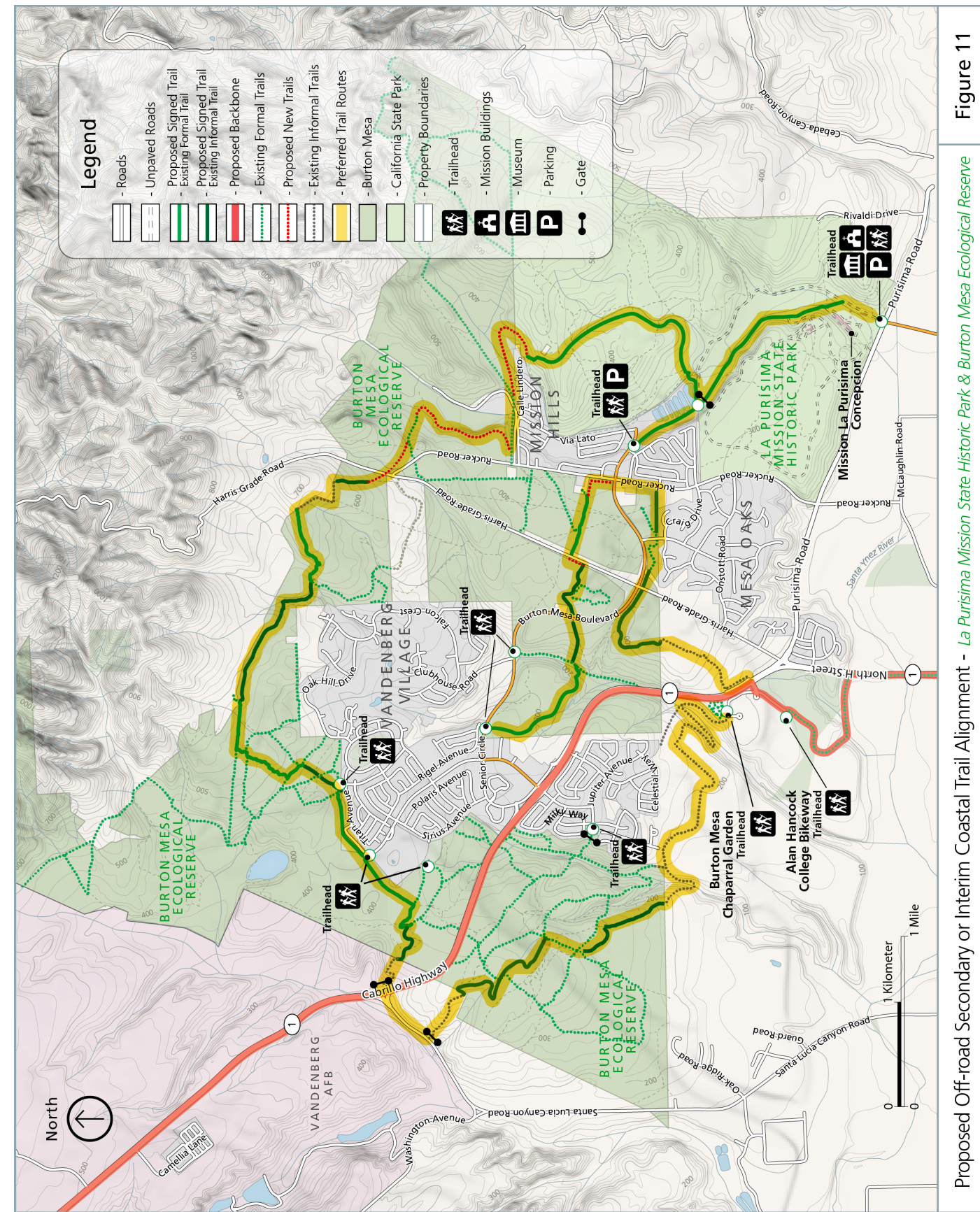
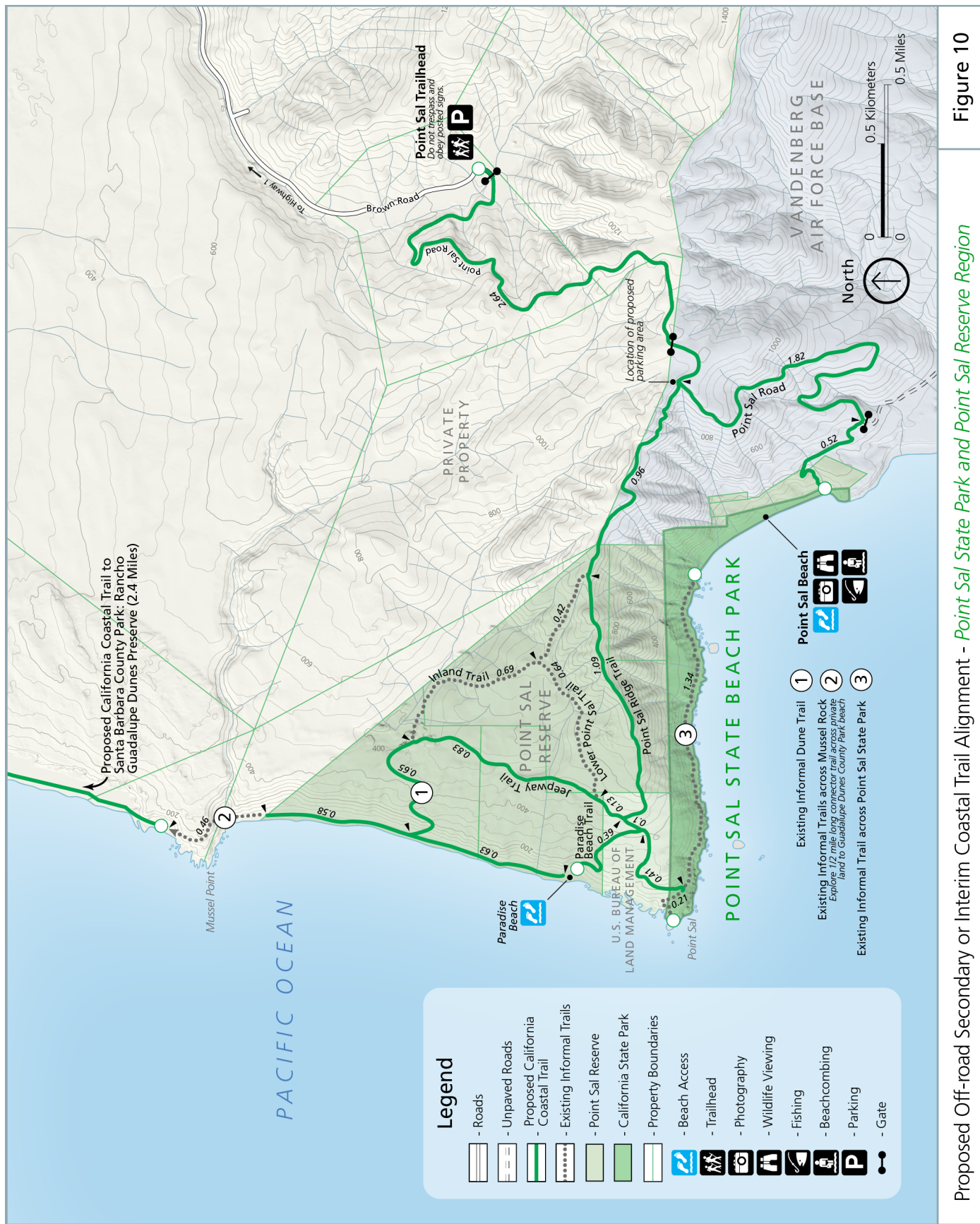
These trails and beach walks are all in current use, but challenges include resolving property ownership along segments of the ridge trail and an approximately 0.5-mile-long stretch of land over Mussel Rock that trail users must walk across that is currently under private ownership. This stretch of land over Mussel Rock cannot be traversed along the coast due to the rough and slippery terrain, and routing further inland of Mussel Rock would involve a greater degree of trespass across private ranch land. The County is working to resolve these issues with VAFB, California State Parks and property owners during preparation of the Countywide Recreation Master Plan, due for completion in late 2021, or early 2022.

Designating these off-road routes as portions of the Interim Coastal Trail to accommodate true coastal access and beach walks consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's Completing the California Coastal Trail, which states: "Create linkages to other trail systems and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers."

The proposed trail would be accessed via the proposed on-road connector trails along West Main Street and Black Road (see Section 4.5, Recommended Spur Routes or Trail), or from the existing Coastal Trail alignment along the beach north of Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park.

Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and La Purisma Mission State Historic Park

This recommended route supports two potential off-road elements of the Coastal Trail through the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and La Purisma Mission State Historic Park. These two areas are the two largest natural open space areas in the Lompoc Valley that serve more than 45,000 residents of the Lompoc Valley. Together, the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve protects over 6,300 acres of public open space and provides trail users with almost 28 miles of off-road trail experience within scenic wildlands, along with the historic mission complex (Figure 11). This includes scenic trail segments with seasonal wildflower blooms and expansive views and wildlife viewing of deer,





coyotes, raptors, bobcats, and the occasional mountain lion. These trails traverse oak woodlands and rare maritime chaparral which supports multiple rare plant species. Vernal wetlands and a vernal pond support federally endangered species such as the California red-legged frog, while other habitats support a wide range of wildlife.

These existing trails are all in current use, but challenges include how best to link the potential off-road routes for the Coastal Trail through both the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve and La Purisima Mission State Historic Park. While the suggested off-road Coastal Trail route would largely follow existing trails, some vegetation clearing would be required to link the two open spaces. Linking these two open spaces to accommodate the Coastal Trail would be consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's *Completing the California Coastal Trail*, which states: "Create linkages to other trail systems and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers." SBCAG and the County would need to work with California State Parks and CDFW on trail planning and design. The Countywide Recreation Master Plan, due for completion in late 2021 or early 2022, may offer a vehicle to facilitate this effort.

The proposed trails at Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve would be accessed via proposed Interim Coastal Trail Segment 2 from Hwy 1. Connection to the La Purisima Mission State Historic Park would be provided via a number of off-road and on-road connections, including direct access from adjacent trails within the Burton Mesa Ecological Trail, or sidewalks and Class II bike lanes along Burton Mesa Road. If traveling south through La Purisima Mission State Historic Park towards the La Purisima Mission Visitor Center, trail users could easily reconnect to the City of Lompoc or with the proposed Interim Coastal Trail Backbone Route by traveling south along Mission Gate Road and Hwy 246 for approximately 2.2 miles to where Hwy 246 intersects Hwy 1 at the beginning of Segment 3.

Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park

This recommend route supports two potential true coastal alignments of the Coastal Trail at Surf Beach and Ocean

Beach County Park, which are the only beaches and coastal access points directly serving the more than 45,000 residents of the Lompoc Valley. Together, Surf Beach and Ocean Beach would provide 0.7-miles of coastline for coast walks and beach access that are currently enjoyed by residents and visitors of the region. The recommended route would extend from and connect Ocean Beach County Park to the north, with Surf Beach at the existing Amtrak Rail Station to the south (Figure 13).

This includes coastal trail segments through or adjacent to highly well-preserved coastal dunes which provide habitat for the sensitive Snowy Plover, and provide additional coastal recreational opportunities such as bird watching, nature photography, surfing, swimming, and marine wildlife viewing within the Vandenberg State Marine Reserve. However, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this Trail Study, both Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park experience seasonal coastal access restrictions for many months of the year. Further, access to the shoreline north and south of Ocean Beach County Park may be subject to access restrictions as the land is owned and managed by VAFB (Jacobson, W. 2020). A benefit to the proposed route at Surf Beach and Ocean Beach County Park is that little to no improvement would be required, as the trail would follow the shoreline. Opportunity exists also for the recommended route to eventually follow along a proposed board walk that may be constructed by VAFB as a means to connect the two beaches, while also reducing the potential for disturbance of Snowy Plover nesting habitat. Establishing this important link between the two beaches to accommodate the Coastal Trail would be consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's *Completing the California Coastal Trail*, which states: "Create linkages to other trail systems and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers." SBCAG, VAFB, CDFW, the City of Lompoc, and the County would need to work together on trail planning and design. The Countywide Recreation Master Plan, due for completion in late 2021, or early 2022, may offer a vehicle to facilitate this effort.

The proposed route along Ocean Beach County Park and



Figure 12

Proposed Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail Alignment - Lompoc Valley Region



Surf Beach would be accessed via the Interim Coastal Trail spur connector route proposed to extend along West Ocean Avenue and a series of local streets from the City of Lompoc at the southern terminus of Segment 2 (see Section 4.5, Recommended Spur Routes or Trail). This would establish an important 11.5-mile-long spur route favorable to on-road cyclists due to adequate road shoulder and low traffic volumes along the connector route. However, the route is uncomfortable for other recreational trail groups, and access to Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach would primarily be limited to persons traveling by car or bicycle. Access to this recommended coastal segments of the Interim Coastal Trail would also be accessible by train to the Surf Beach Amtrak Rail Station.

Jalama Beach County Park

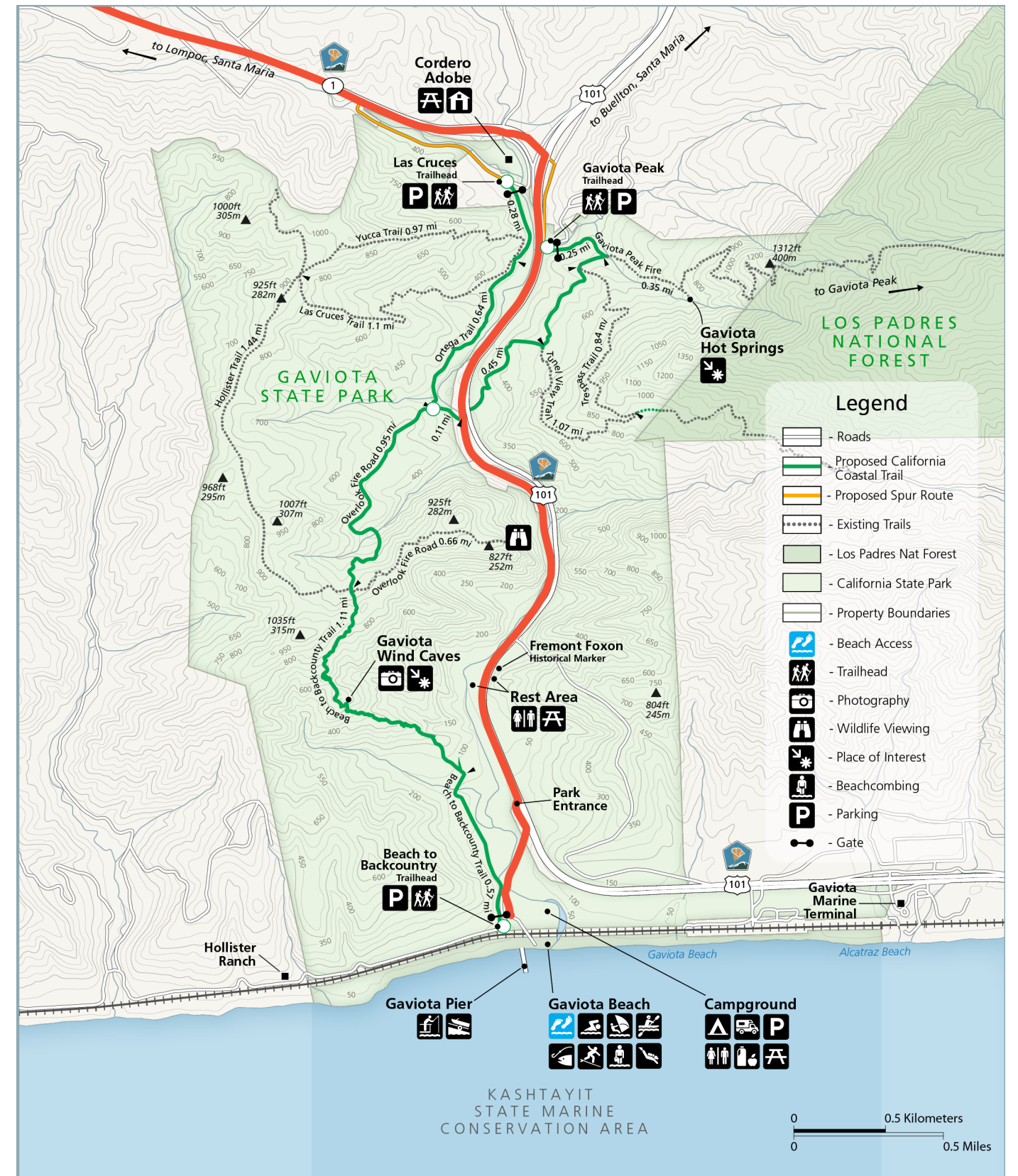
This recommend route would support a 0.6-mile-long true coastal alignment of the Coastal Trail at Jalama Beach County Park, one of the few existing public coastal access locations within North County. The 0.6-mile-long trail would extend from Jalama Beach County Park south along the coastal bluff to the northern edge of the Dangermond Preserve (Figure 15). Though adequate sandy beach exists along the coast below the bluff, the bluff-top route is identified in this Trail Study as a recommend coastal segment of the Interim Coastal Trail given that lateral access back up the bluff does not exist, and through access along the coast to the south of Jalama Road at Cojo Bay Road is currently prohibited across the Dangermond Preserve by the Nature Conservancy. The coastal trail atop the bluff would also allow for potential future connection to pending public access improvements through the Dangermond Preserve and County Gerber Fee Parcels along Cojo Road. In addition, the County and Trails Council are currently investigating the feasibility of a trail down a rocky ravine dubbed "the crack" just south of the terminus of this route (see Chapter 5). Future construction of this lateral access point would permit direct access to the coast and facilitate a loop trail that would utilize both the road shoulder along Jalama Road and the shoreline below the bluff.

This coastal trail segment along the relatively flat bluff-top



Proposed Off-road Interim Coastal Trail Alignment

Surf Beach to Ocean Beach County Park Figure 13



Proposed Off-road/On-road Interim Coastal Trail Alignment - Gaviota State Park

Figure 14



Proposed Off-road Interim Coastal Trail Alignment

Jalama Beach County Park

Figure 15

adjacent to Jalama Road would traverse highly well preserved Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat. The route would offer expansive views of the ocean and scenic North County coastline in one of the least developed coastal areas of the County. At Jalama Beach County Park, coastal recreational opportunities include tent and RV camping, bird watching, fishing, nature photography, surfing, swimming, and marine wildlife viewing.

Establishing this important off-road segment along the coast at Jalama Beach County Park to accommodate the Coastal Trail would be consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's Completing the California Coastal Trail, which states: "Create linkages to other trail systems and to units of the State Park system, and use the Coastal Trail system to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers." The County would need to work together with Dangermond Preserve and the Nature Conservancy to increase public access across the Dangermond Preserve and establish critical improvements of the Coastal Trail which have long since been planned for as part of the County's acquisition of the Gerber Fee Parcels. The Countywide Recreation Master Plan, due for completion in late 2021 or early 2022, may offer a vehicle to facilitate this effort.

The proposed route to Jalama Beach County Park would be accessed via the 14.3-mile-long Interim Coastal Trail spur connector route proposed to extend along Jalama Road from Hwy 1 to Jalama Beach County Park (see Section 4.5, *Recommended Spur Routes or Trail*). This is favored and well-traveled by cyclists looking for a scenic and challenging ride, but is uncomfortable for other recreational trail groups due to lack of a parallel off-road trail.

4.5 Recommended Spur Routes or Trails

The major limitations of the *Backbone* Route are that it does not directly provide access to coastal areas, the pro-



posed coastal routes, or non-bicycling opportunities, and is in fact well removed from the coast and would serve largely serve only on-road cyclists which represent a small fraction of the trail community. While several of the planned off-road routes would address these shortcomings, improved connections to the coast would remain a priority. Routes to the coastal access points in the North County tend to be limited to one route in and out, with no alternative routes connecting back to the through route. As a solution, five "spur routes" are recommended to be included as part of the Interim Coastal Trail route to connect to the coastal access locations, the recommended Interim Coastal Trail off-road routes described above, and other points of interest. These spur routes include:

- West Main Street from Hwy 1 in the City of Guadalupe to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park.
- Brown Road from Hwy 1 to Point Sal State Park and the County's Point Sal Reserve.
- Hwy 246 and a series of local streets from the intersection of Hwy 246/Hwy 1 to Ocean Beach County Park.
- Jalama Road to Jalama Beach County Park.
- Hwy 246 northeast from Hwy 1 to Mission Gate Road and La Purisima Mission State Historic Park.



Hwy 246 Spur to La Purisima Mission passes entrance to River Park

Table 10. Summary of the Recommended Spur Routes

SWOT Segment	Jurisdiction	Route Extent	Length
2	City of Guadalupe; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve	4.9 Mi
5	California State Parks; County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to trailhead for Point Sal State Beach and Point Sal Reserve	3.5 Mi
18	City of Lompoc; Caltrans	Hwy 246 (East Ocean Avenue) from Hwy 1, South 7th Street, West Cypress Avenue, O Street, West Olive Avenue, South V Street, and West Ocean Avenue to Ocean Beach County Park	5.6 Mi
19	County of Santa Barbara	Hwy 1 to Jalama Beach County Park	14.3 Mi
--	City of Lompoc; Caltrans	Hwy 246 (East Ocean Avenue) northeast from Hwy 1 to Mission Gate Road at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park	2.3 Mi
Total Recommended Spur Routes Length			30.6 Mi



Walking the Proposed Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail

Trail Forward

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter

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5.2 Pending Cumulative Projects and Opportunities	89



This chapter provides information to support more detailed planning for and design of the proposed Interim Coastal Trail and associated coastal access system. These proposed improvements would enhance coastal access in the North County, particularly for on-road cyclists along road shoulders for the *Backbone* Route. Potential off-road opportunities for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians would potentially provide benefits to a much broader group of users through improved access provided at eight different locations, with a total of up to 38.8 miles of off-road or coastal trails, and enhanced access to the coast (e.g., Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park, Point Sal, and Burton Mesa and others). However, more detailed planning and coordination between agencies, property owners, and user groups would be required to finalize design of both on and off-road routes.

Implementation of the study recommendations will require leadership and support from a wide range of agencies including Caltrans, SBCAG, the County and other local agencies, VAFB, California State Parks, California department of Fish and Wildlife and coordination with the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy. These agencies would all have responsibility for oversight/approval or development of various segments of the proposed trail (refer to Tables 11 and 12).

Implementing Agencies

A range of local, state and even federal agencies have differing roles in implementing on-road and off-road segments as discussed below:

Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)

SBCAG sometimes plays a major role in some trail projects such as leading the Santa Ynez River Trail Study. However, SBCAG is primarily a programming agency tasked with regional planning and completion of the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan which guides regional transportation improvements and programs funding for such improvements, as well as plans such as Santa Ynez Valley Bicycle Master Plan. SBCAG could play an important role in implementing the *Backbone* Trail by programming

needed improvements within the State Transportation Improvement Program/Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP/RTIP) and possibly leading segment specific planning efforts. However, the primary implementing agencies maybe Caltrans and the County of Santa Barbara. Further, SBCAG typically focuses on transportation or commuter related road projects; it is unclear what role SBCAG would play in implementing off-road recreational trail routes other than their designation in the STIP/RTIP.

California Department of Transportation, District 5 (Caltrans)

Caltrans has jurisdiction over Hwy 1, which makes up the vast majority of (39.7-miles; 70 percent) of the proposed *Backbone* Route. On-road improvement projects could be implemented through a partnership between Caltrans and a local or regional agency involving either an existing SHOPP project or an entirely separate non-SHOPP oversight project. Full funding is more likely through partnership opportunities with Caltrans as the lead agency. Maintenance and liability are key concerns for public agencies and private owners since ongoing maintenance costs can be expensive, especially for separated off-system paths.

SBCAG could assist with segments and programming funding. At the same time, the County of Santa Barbara and cities of Lompoc and Guadalupe would all be interested in any improvements in areas under their jurisdiction. Projects would involve a coordinated effort lead by SBCAG or local agencies, while Caltrans would serve as a lead agency. Not all improvements to the state highway system are funded and implemented by Caltrans. Improvements to the state highway system can be funded and completed by other agencies such as a city, or other entity, under an encroachment permit.

County of Santa Barbara

The County of Santa Barbara has jurisdiction over local roads along the proposed *Backbone* Trail route such as Black Road/Lompoc-Casmalia Road/San Antonio Road West, as well as the majority of the spur routes such as West Main Street, Brown Road, West Ocean Avenue, and



Jalama Road and would be the primary agency responsible for implementing on-road improvements along these roads.

California Coastal Commission

The Coastal Commission plans and regulates the use of land and water in the coastal zone. The California Coastal Commission will primarily be responsible for the issuance of permits necessary for the construction, replacement, or improvement of on-road and off-road segments within the coastal zone of North County, as well as ensuring the Interim Coastal Trail aligns with the requirements and regulations outlined in the California Coastal Act.

California State Coast Conservancy

The California State Coastal Conservancy is tasked with helping to protect and improve natural lands and waterways, help people access and enjoy the outdoors, sustain local economies along the length of California's coast and around San Francisco Bay, and to implement creation of the remaining segments of the Coastal Trail. The California State Coastal Conservancy would be a supporting agency in the implementation and improvement of identified off-road segments along the North County coast, including at Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, Point Sal Reserve, Ocean Beach County Park, Surf Beach, and Jalama Beach County Park, as well as potential future coastal access improvements at the Dangermond Preserve and Hollister Ranch.

California State Parks

California State Parks would have authority over proposed off-road trail improvements within La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and Gaviota State Park as well as within Point Sal State Beach, although Coastal Trail and access improvements would need to be done in coordination with the County of Santa Barbara and VAFB.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) would have authority over proposed Coastal Trail improvements located within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve.

Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB)

VAFB would have authority over improvements at Point Sal Reserve located on the base, particularly the trail (historic Point Sal Road) that traverses VAFB from the top of the ridge to Point Sal State Beach as well as potentially along the ridge trail that provides access to Point Sal and the County's Point Sal Reserve. VAFB would also consult with the County and Caltrans over any road improvements within the base along the *Backbone* Trail.

City of Lompoc

The City of Lompoc would have authority over improvements to any surface streets or bike paths within the City of Lompoc, including potential signage on West Central Avenue, any improvements to the Riverbend Park and River Park Class I multi-use path or smaller surface streets such as E. North Avenue.

City of Guadalupe

The City of Guadalupe would coordinate with Caltrans on any changes to Hwy 1 through the City of Guadalupe and with the County of Santa Barbara for improvements to West Main Street within or adjacent to the City of Guadalupe.

For proposed off-road segments, the County of Santa Barbara would be the lead agency for many improvements, but California State Parks would have approval authority over and play important roles in proposed trail improvements at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park. CDFW would have authority over improvements within the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve. The City of Lompoc would have authority over Riverbend Park and River Park improvements, while VAFB and the County would need to work together at Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach (Table 12).

In addition to the technical and financial issues associated with trail construction, the off-road segments may also require future permitting and environmental review and, in some cases, easements across privately owned property (e.g., Mussel Rock).



5.1 Proposed Implementation Strategies

Improvements for the enhancement of public access to and along the coast and completion of the interim alignment of the North County Coastal Trail involve different challenges for on-road and off-road segment as discussed below. Implementation of the Interim Coastal Trail and recommended trail and roadway improvements would be subject to the 2014 California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Revision 5 (CA MUTCD), the Caltrans Highway Design Manual (HDM) Seventh Edition, County Engineering Design Standards, and other design guides for transportation facilities. As trail segments are designed, they would need to meet each individual agency's requirements for design standards.

Backbone Trail On-road Route

On-road segment improvements along the proposed 56.8-mile-long Interim Coastal Trail Backbone Route would primarily be for users enhanced safety and comfort through road widening where feasible and installation of Class II bike lanes. Similar improvements could occur on some spur trails, although space is often constrained along narrow country roads such as Jalama

Road. Most such improvements would be directed to better accommodate experienced road cyclists, although in limited locations such as within the City of Lompoc and adjacent areas in the Lompoc Valley could include improved or widened road shoulder trails for pedestrians and runners. Such improvements would need to be designed and coordinated following current transportation design standards (e.g., California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Highway Design Manual). However, limited right-of-way width and constrained topography render these improvements difficult to accomplish in many locations. Future road improvement, maintenance, or bridge projects along the Backbone and Spur Trail alignments are recommended to be designed to provide on-road improvements such as full Class II bike lanes or, at minimum, wider fog lines to maximize the comfort and enjoyment for cyclists. Where roadway widening is required, such improvements can be expensive and require long-term programming in the Caltrans State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP) and SBCAG's STIP/RTIP. Several specific on-road improvements that should be prioritized and implemented as soon as possible to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians along the Backbone Trail include:

- **Backbone Trail Priority 1:** Explore opportunities to secure or improve pedestrians and cyclists' access at Hwy



Priorities for implementation of the proposed Backbone Route should emphasize opportunities for enhancing road shoulder and safety for cyclists through areas where no road shoulder exists or safe access is a concern. Such opportunities exist along much of Hwy 1 and at existing bridges such as Solomon Canyon Creek bridge. Photo Source: Google Maps, 2020.



Table 11. On-road Coastal Trail Segment Implementation

Improvements	Jurisdiction	Key Improvements/ Issues
Hwy 1 Bridge Widening	Caltrans*	Explore opportunities to secure or improve pedestrian and bicycle access at narrow bridges where narrow/no shoulder exists.
Class III Shared Use Lane along Black Road/W. Casmalia-Lompoc Road/San Antonio Road West	County, SBCAG	Install Class III "Shared Use" signage and stripping
Class III Shared Use Signage and Stenciling	County, SBCAG	Install Class III "Shared Use" signage and stripping along identified spur routes
Install Safety Measures at Hwy 1 Bridges	Caltrans*, SBCAG	Install flashing lights and signage for pedestrians and cyclists along narrow bridges (e.g., Solomon Canyon Creek, UPRR overpass) along Hwy 1 and through Gaviota Pass
Interim Coastal Trail Backbone Route Signage	Caltrans*, SBCAG, County, City of Lompoc	Implement signage program and install signs along route

* requires partnerships with local and regional agencies

1 bridges across Solomon Canyon Creek and UPRR between the City of Guadalupe and Black Road due to lack of shoulder. Improvements of these crossings to provide pedestrian and bicycle access would involve longer-term timelines.

- **Backbone Trail Priority 2:** Explore opportunities to secure or improve pedestrians and cyclists' access to narrow bridges on Hwy 1 across Salsipuedes Creek and El Jaro Creek between Lompoc and Gaviota. Improvements of these crossings to provide pedestrian and bicycle access would involve longer-term timelines.
- **Backbone Trail Priority 3:** Installation and enhancement of Class III "Shared Use" signage and stenciling along the Black Road/W. Casmalia-Lompoc Road/San Antonio Road West trail segment. Ensure that adequate signage is installed to alert motorists to the need to share the road along these segments.
- **Backbone Trail Priority 4:** Installation and enhancement of Class III Shared Use signage and stenciling along spur routes.
- **Backbone Trail Priority 5:** Installation of flashing lights and signage for pedestrians and cyclists along narrow bridges such as Solomon Canyon Creek and the UPRR along Hwy 1 and through the Gaviota Pass Tunnel, sim-

ilar to the signage provided along Hwy 101 southbound across Arroyo Quemado.

- **Backbone Trail Priority 6:** Planning signage to guide pedestrians and cyclists along the trail route, to points of interest, and the location of near-trail services. Signage should consider using best practices identified in the Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition's Bicycle Wayfinding Proposal dated September 2014. Caltrans, the County of Santa Barbara, and cities along the proposed route have various signage regulations and requirements. Therefore sign design and placement along the route may vary based on sign location.

Off-road Coastal Trail Segments

Some of the recommended routes for off-road segments of the Coastal Trail require no major changes, except for signage and perhaps trailhead parking. For example, the 2.5-mile beach walk in Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park requires only signage, while the 4.7-mile route through Gaviota State Park requires signage, perhaps some trail tread improvements and potentially designated parking. Where needed, improvements to the off-road trail network are often less expensive, but can also require permitting and environmental review as well as coordina-



Table 12. Off-road Coastal Trail Segment Implementation

Trail Segment	Jurisdiction	Key Improvements/ Issues
Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park	County of Santa Barbara, Parks Division	Install Coastal Trail signage; pursue acquisition of or easements across Mussel Rock.
Point Sal	County of Santa Barbara; VAFB; California State Parks	Install Coastal Trail signage; work with VAFB and California State Parks to formalize and improve access to Point Sal Beach; pursue acquisition of or easements along ridge trail and/ or realign trail onto VAFB; improve Coastal Trail segment in the County's Point Sal Reserve; install ridge top parking lot and restroom.
Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve	CDFW; County of Santa Barbara	Install Coastal Trail signage and consider developing parking area; work with CDFW and California State Parks to align existing or develop new trail segments to link the reserve with La Purisima Mission State Historic Park.
La Purisima Mission State Historic Park	California State Parks; County of Santa Barbara	Install Coastal Trail signage at southern and northern end of park and at the Mission Hill Community Park entrance area.
Riverbend Park and River Park	City of Lompoc; County of Santa Barbara	Install Coastal Trail signage; work with County to consider if a river crossing to provide linkages with La Purisima Mission State Historic Park that would be safe and feasible.
Ocean Beach County Park and Surf Beach	VAFB; County of Santa Barbara	Install Coastal Trail signage; work with VAFB to install 3,000-foot-long boardwalk seaward of the UPRR to link Ocean beach County Park and Surf Beach.
Jalama Beach County Park	County of Santa Barbara, Parks Division	Install Coastal Trail signage; investigate necessary safety enhancements for cyclists and pedestrians along Jalama Road from Hwy 1 to Jalama Beach County Park.
Gaviota State Park	California State Parks	Install signage for Coastal Trail routes and trailhead parking at northern and southern ends of park.

tion with different agencies. For example, while currently experiencing moderate use along a well-developed trail, the existing ridge trail alignment at Point Sal crosses private land, VAFB, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and lands within the County's Point Sal Reserve. Formalizing the Coastal Trail along the alignment of this existing trail ridgeline would require either acquiring easements or purchasing private property or realigning the trail onto VAFB. VAFB has agreed to coordinate with the County on addressing access issues at Point Sal, but planning, permitting and environmental review will be required (see Appendix D for VAFB letter). In order to ensure that key off-road segments are recognized, the County should ensure that its Local Coastal Plan (LCP) is amended to reflect such segments. Major short term actions to open key off-

road segments of the Coastal Trail include:

- **Short-Term Off-road Priority 1:** The County and City of Lompoc should coordinate with VAFB to install a 3,000-foot-long back dune boardwalk segment of the Coastal Trail along the seaward side of the UPRR to link Ocean Beach County Park with Surf Beach to permit beach goers to bypass areas of beach that are closed to protect western snowy plover nesting.
- **Short Term Off-road Priority 2:** The County should coordinate with VAFB and California State Parks to repair the Point Sal Road/Trail to ease access to Point Sal and Point Sal State Beach, complete installation of a ridge-top parking lot and restroom, install Coastal Trail signage and consider limited improvements at the trail



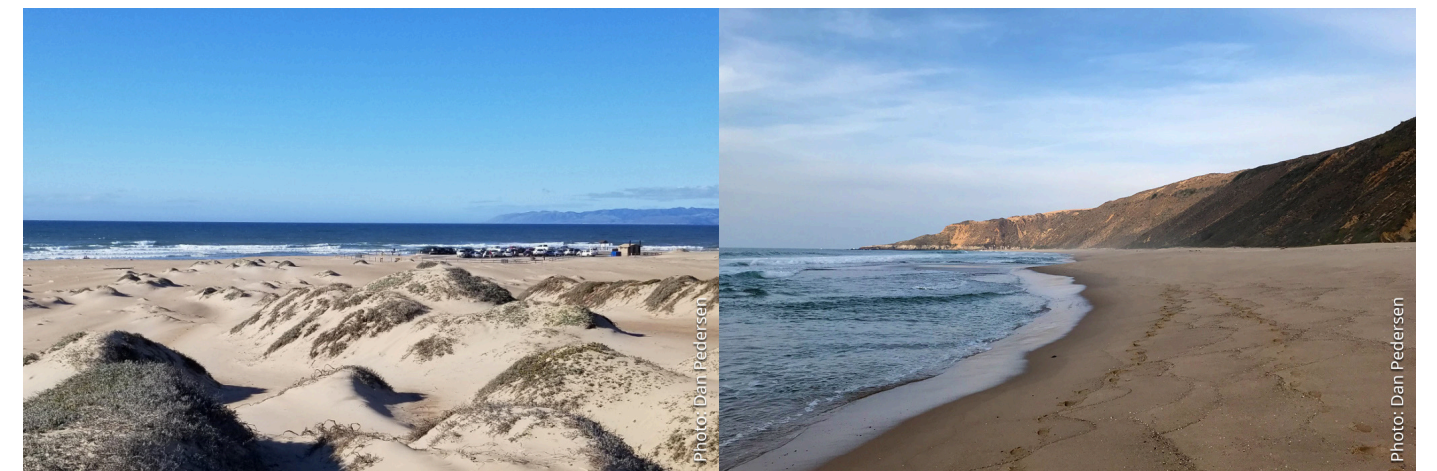
landing at Point Sal State Beach, including a coastal access ramp, trail or stairway and amenities such as picnic tables.

- **Short Term Off-road Priority 3:** The County should coordinate with VAFB and California State Parks to open the existing Point Sal Ridge Trail to help complete this segment of the Coastal Trail and provide formal legal access to Point Sal and the County's Point Sal Reserve, including improvements to both the Paradise Beach Trail and Jeep-way Trail to provide an inland leg of the Coastal Trail (Figure 9).
- **Short Term Off-road Priority 4:** The County should coordinate with California State Parks and CDFW to complete linkages to enable opening a 5 to 6-mile-long segment of the Coastal Trail through La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve to provide off-road Coastal Trail opportunity to the residents of the Lompoc Valley and visitors, particularly for dog walkers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

Over the long-term, a number of options for expanding public access to existing parks and reserves may be available. These matters are presented more generally, as they involve private land where access is currently under study, or existing parks and reserves where multi use access along planned Coastal Trail routes is currently restricted. Other recommendations and implementation

strategies to improve off-road opportunities for hikers, off-road cyclists (e.g., mountain bikers), and equestrians include:

- **Long Term Off-road Priority 1:** Existing users of the Coastal Trail along the beach travel from Guadalupe Dunes County Park to Point Sal, across a 0.25-mile-long segment of private land on the Corralitos Ranch at Mussel Point, to Paradise Beach and Point Sal. The County should explore acquisition of the Corralitos Ranch or purchase of an easement across Mussel Rock to achieve a formal connection to link the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park and Point Sal Reserve segments of the Coastal Trail.
- **Long Term Off-road Priority 2:** The County should consider changes to the draft Point Sal Reserve Master Plan including broadening uses to permit equestrians, dog walkers, and mountain bikers, as well as considering permitting overnight backpacking to this wildland area.
- **Long Term Off-road Priority 3:** As part of the Dangermond Reserve Master Plan process, SBCAG and the County should work with the Nature Conservancy to investigate and consider acquisition of rights to a multiple use trail connection across the Dangermond Preserve south from Jalama County Road at Jalama County Beach Park, consistent with the alignment for the Coastal Trail depicted in the County's adopted Gaviota Coast Plan.



Short-term priorities for implementation of the proposed off-road segments of the Interim Coastal Trail should emphasize coordination with responsible agencies to ensure that off-road routes and trails are implemented or improved consistent with the policies of the California Coastal Act and other regulations as they relate to implementation of the Coastal Trail. These largely include formalizing a trail system and ensuring public access rights along the shoreline between Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve (pictured left) and Point Sal Reserve (pictured right).



Such a trail could potentially be acquired in exchange for relinquishing the existing Gerber Fee Easement; depending on the outcome of the Hollister Ranch Coastal Access Study, access through to a Hollister Ranch Coastal Trail could be considered.

- **Long Term Off-road Priority 5:** SBCAG should work with State Parks and CDFW to explore expanding allowable user groups along the Coastal Trail by providing a true multiple use trail, including mountain biking and dog walking in Gaviota State Park, La Purisima Mission State Historic Park and the Burton Mesa Ecological Reserve.
- **Long Term Off-road Priority 6:** SBCAG should monitor the Hollister Ranch Public Access Program and work with the State Coastal Conservancy and Coastal Commission to ensure that SBCAG’s planning accounts for how the Hollister Ranch coastal access issue is resolved.

5.2 Pending Cumulative Projects and Opportunities

It is important to coordinate improvements and opportunities for expansion of the Interim Coastal Trail with other projects or development occurring in northern Santa Barbara County. The cumulative projects described below present just several potential opportunities that should be coordinated with implementation of the Interim Coastal Trail and improvement of the identified *Backbone* Route, spur routes, connector routes and trails.

A. Hwy 1 Santa Maria River Bridge Replacement

Caltrans will construct a new bridge across the Santa Maria River at the Santa Barbara/San Luis

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: A

SBCAG should monitor the progress of this project and encourage Caltrans to implement a design that would facilitate safe pedestrian and bicycle access across the Hwy 1 Santa Maria River bridge

Obispo county line, north of Guadalupe, with two 12-foot-wide travel lanes plus eight-foot-wide outside shoulders and an eight-foot-wide protected pathway along the southbound (west) side of the bridge for use by pedestrians.

B. Paved Shoulders on Hwy 1 South of Guadalupe

Caltrans plans to add five-foot paved shoulders along the proposed route to Black Road, and eight-foot paved shoulders beyond to Orcutt.

C. Hwy 1 Solomon Canyon CAPM Pavement Project

This Caltrans project would preserve pavement on SR 1 for 18.6 miles from Solomon Road to SR 166 just south of Guadalupe. The project is scheduled to begin construction in spring 2021.

D. Hwy 1 Solomon Canyon Shoulder Widening

This Caltrans project will install eight-foot-wide shoulders along Hwy 1 between Solomon Road and Black Road, and five-foot shoulders between Black Road to Hwy 166. However, the project does not include widening the Union Pacific Railroad bridge shoulders or Solomon Canyon Creek bridge shoulders. The estimated \$28.8 million project is scheduled to begin construction in 2024.

E. Hwy 246 Santa Ynez River Bridge Project

As part of the Measure A Strategic Plan, SBCAG identified the Hwy 246 Santa Ynez River Bridge Project. This project proposed to improve existing portions of Hwy 246 to the east side of the City of Lompoc, either through replacement of the existing Hwy 246 bridge across the Santa Ynez River, widening roadway and road shoulder and elevating

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: B, C, & D

SBCAG should monitor the progress of this proposed project and encourage Caltrans to consider a design that would facilitate safe pedestrian and bicycle access along the route, including “Shared Use” signage and stripping, as well as cyclist and pedestrian crossing safety lighting and signage across existing bridges.

the bridge and roadway above the base flood elevation, or establishing a new alignment for a new bridge. The project was identified as being necessary to ensure reliable connection to the City, elevating bridge infrastructure above the base flood elevation, and allowing adequate land and shoulder widths to accommodate higher comfort travel by vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and farm equipment. Completion of the project is contingent upon completion of a feasibility study and appropriate environmental review. The cost of the project was initial estimated at \$27 million and preliminary engineering was not expected to occur until 2027.

F. Mission Hills Community Park

Mission Hills Community Services District (MHCS D) provides water to Mission Hills, located just north of La Purisima Mission State Historic Park. MHCS D operates a primary water treatment plant. At the entry to their facilities is a small park with a playground, picnic area, and parking for about a dozen cars. The park is a de facto trailhead for an infrequently used service road that abuts the west side of the MHCS D property. The well-aged road parallels an array of water basins and connects Burton Mesa Boulevard with a network of trails within La Purisima Mission State Historic Park. This popular recreational trail route is an example of the public-owned property being made available to improve recreational opportunities for hikers, trail runners, cyclists, and sometimes equestrians.

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: E

As part of the engineering and design of the bridge replacement, SBCAG should consider means for securing or improvement pedestrian and bicycle access, as well as installation of additional safety measures such as signage and safety lighting.

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: F

SBCAG should work with County and State agencies to improve connectivity between Mission Hills Community Services District Trailhead and the trails in the Burton Mesa Ecological Preserve.

G. Two Options For Multi-Use Trails in Guadalupe

Two studies are underway to create new trails east and west of Guadalupe. The first is the Santa Maria Levee Trail Feasibility Study. With funding support from the California State Coastal Conservancy, the County is currently preparing a feasibility study for a 6.7-mile extension of the Santa Maria River Levee Trail from the City of Santa Maria to the City of Guadalupe. The Santa Maria River Levee Trail would involve a separated Class I multi-use path on land owned and maintained by the County Public Works Department and adjacent to private agricultural land. The trail would enable a future connection between the cities. The second is the Guadalupe to Beach Multi-Use Trail Feasibility Study. This study, also funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy, is looking at the feasibility of a trail from the City of Guadalupe to the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve on the coast. The County would own, operate, and maintain these trails. The studies’ goal is to recommend ways to expand and improve public access to the coast and provide an alternate east-west active transportation corridor through the area.

H. Ocean Beach and Surf Beach

In a request submitted to USFWS on August 2, 2019 in response to a biological opinion on the Beach Management Plan and Water Rescue Training at Vandenberg Air Force Base issued in 2015, VAFB proposed to eliminate the

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: G

SBCAG should work with the County to closely monitor the progress of the Santa Maria Levee Trail Feasibility Study and the Guadalupe to Beach Multi-Use Trail Feasibility Study to help establish a multi-use path as a spur route of the Interim Coastal Trail.

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: H

SBCAG should work with VAFB, the County, and the City of Lompoc to investigate and propose development of a boardwalk between Surf Beach and Ocean Beach and designate the boardwalk as a segment of the Coastal Trail.





closure of recreational areas of Surf Beach due to trespass violations. As described above in Section 2 of this Trail Study, Surf Beach and Ocean Beach are currently subject to an avoidance and minimization measure that results in the closure of all recreational beach access if VAFB records a total of 50 violations of western snowy plover breeding season restrictions. VAFB proposal to eliminate closure of areas of Surf Beach in response to these violations would allow recreational access to remain open throughout the western snowy plover breeding season. Though existing snowy plover breeding areas would remain restricted during the breeding season, this change in management of Surf Beach would drastically improve coastal access at one of the North County's few public coastal access locations.

In addition to these changes in management, VAFB and the Coastal Commission, with prompting from the City of Lompoc, are engaged in considering constructing a boardwalk which would link Surf Beach and Ocean Beach to allow through public access in a manner that would avoid restricted snowy plover breeding areas. These pending future projects would facilitate increased public access to currently restricted coastal areas and an approximately 0.6-mile-long boardwalk between the two beaches could serve as a true coastal trail.

I. Dangermond Preserve Coastal Access Improvements

In spring 2020, the Nature Conservancy published the Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve Integrated Resources Management Plan, which outlines the plan for management of the natural resources of the preserve, as well as managing public access. Currently, public access across the preserve is prohibited, but the Nature Conservancy acknowledges and permits the public to demonstrate their legal right

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: I

SBCAG should work with the County and the Nature Conservancy to facilitate public access along the Dangermond Preserve's coastline or along the existing established road network within the preserve to provide a valuable Coastal Trail route around Point Conception.

to access the shoreline below the mean high tide. However, in many places, due protruding bluffs and cliff and absence of a wide sandy beach, access below the mean high tide line is not possible, and north-south public access along the coast or across the preserve does not exist. As part of the management methods and recommendations of the plan, the Nature Conservancy intends to "monitor trends in people accessing the Preserve coast, including legal public access below [mean high water] MWH, Conservancy-sponsored and approved access (e.g., visitors, scientists) and trespass across the Preserve." It is uncertain how or if the Nature Conservancy will permit or improve public access along the coast or across the preserve. How the Nature Conservancy and County will address the County's intended project for a trail along Cojo Bay within existing County-owned easements across the Gerber Fee Parcels is unknown at this time.

J. Jalama Beach County Park Coastal Parking and Bluff Top Trail

The County of Santa Barbara, Community Services, Parks Division, is initiating a project to improve coastal access through 36 acres of land south of Jalama Beach County Park. Because of the steep 100-foot high coastal bluff, patterns of existing use, and increased demand to access the renowned Tarantulas surf break, options are for a 6/10ths-mile coastal bluff-top trail route across the bluff-top and down the bluff face (proximate to the surf break) are under consideration. The steep and highly eroded nature of surfers' traditional canyon route presents challenges for constructing and maintaining formal public access. Additional parking will be included in the project. Funding for planning and permitting is provided by the California Coastal Conservancy using Violation Remediation Account money and a Coastal Resource Energy Fund grant from the County of Santa Barbara to Santa Barbara County Trails Council. The project would directly benefit

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: J

SBCAG should work with all stakeholders to extend the California Coastal Trail across the coastal bluff-tops north and south of Jalama Beach County Park.



walkers, hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers, bird watchers, equestrians, anglers, surfers, beachcombers, and others interested in outdoor recreation consistent with State and County goals.

K. County of Santa Barbara Countywide Recreation Master Plan

The County is currently engaged in efforts to prepare a Countywide Recreation Master Plan to provide a strategic planning program for parks, trails, and recreation facilities throughout the County. The project will assess existing facilities, address unmet recreation needs, identify a range of recreation improvements, and foster coordination and cooperation between the County, cities, agencies, non-profit, and private recreation service providers. The Countywide Recreation Master Plan is intended to identify key improvements to coastal access and off-road trail alignments, particularly within northern Santa Barbara County where such amenities are severely lacking. Several preliminary focus or opportunity areas include the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve and Point Sal Reserve.

L. U.S. Bicycle Route 95

In 1978, the American Association of State Highways and Transportation Officials began work on identifying and designating a nation-wide bicycle network and had approved two U.S. Bicycle Routes in 1982. However, following approval of those two routes, progress in designating additional routes

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: K

SBCAG should engage in and work with County as part of the Countywide Recreation Master Plan to identify critical improvements to the Coastal Trail, with particular emphasis on construction and designation of off-road trails and improved coastal access in the North County.

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: L

SBCAG should engage in and work with Caltrans and other bicycle advocacy groups such as Adventure Cycling Association to designate and promote the alignment, or portions, of the proposed Interim Coastal Trail Backbone Route as U.S. Bicycle Route 95.

came to a halt and lay dormant for nearly 20 years. The process in identifying and designating additional routes began again in the early 2000s and to date, the U.S. Bicycle Route System consists of over 14,000 miles of national bicycle routes and networks connecting urban and rural communities across 27 states. Many of these routes consist of signed roads and trails, and the Departments of Transportation, which officially designates and manages the system. A group of over twenty volunteers, including the Adventure Cycling Association, hope to add many more (Adventure Cycling Association 2020a). The U.S. Bicycle Route 95 is proposed to connect portions of Alaska and the entire Pacific Coast of the U.S. from the U.S.-Canada border to San Diego; however, this route is not yet formalized, and no specific corridors or alignments for the route have been identified. The lack of a formal route presents an interesting opportunity for SBCAG and local or national bicycle advocacy groups to identify and promote the preferred alignment for U.S. Bicycle Route 95 through the County.

M. Hwy 1 Guadalupe ADA Enhancements

As part of Caltrans District 5 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Pedestrian Infrastructure Program, this project proposes improving the sidewalks in the City of Guadalupe along Highway 1 and Highway 166. In coordination with the City of Guadalupe's Mobility and Revitalization Master Plan, this project is considering other Complete Streets elements, including bicycle infrastructure, that could benefit the California Coastal Trail alignment in this location. New sidewalks may be constructed at locations where pedestrian needs are evident and bicycle racks will likely be installed. If awarded additional funding, this project may enhance the existing Class II bike lanes on Highway 1 by adding a painted buffer between the bicycle lanes and the travel lanes. The cost of this project is estimated at approximately \$3 million and construction is set to begin in 2024.

Recommended Interim Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy: M

SBCAG should monitor the process of this project and ensure proper signage is installed and proposed improvements/amenities be designated as part of the Coastal Trail.



Cycling the Proposed Secondary or Interim Coastal Trail

References and List of Preparers CHAPTER 6

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6.1 List of Preparers

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6.2 References

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6.1 List of Preparers

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■ Ken Dahmen	Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition
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■ David Lackie	County of Santa Barbara, Planning Department
■ Dan Pederson	County of Santa Barbara, Community Services Department, Parks Division
■ Will Robertson	County of Santa Barbara, Public Works
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Burton Mesa Ecological Preserve

Appendix

Appendices

[Appendix A: Public Workshops](#)

[Appendix B: SWOT Analysis](#)

[Appendix C: SWOT Evaluation Criteria](#)

[Appendix D: Letter from Vandenberg Air Force Base](#)

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