



San Benito County General Plan Update OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES REPORT

Public Review Draft | November 18, 2010



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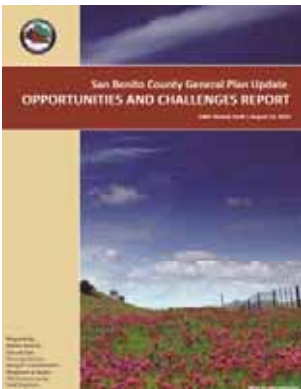
San Benito County General Plan Update
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES REPORT

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Section 1 Introduction



Purpose of this Report

San Benito County is in the process of comprehensively updating its current General Plan. Once adopted, the updated plan will guide the County's decisions on future land use, conservation, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure decisions. The purpose of this report is to focus the community's attention on the major constraints, opportunities, and challenges facing the county that need to be addressed during the General Plan Update process.

This report synthesizes and uses information gathered from community workshops held in October 2007, a community survey conducted in early 2008, the draft General Plan Background Report, General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) input, and County staff and consultant observations. This report is intended to help stimulate discussion and provide context for the preparation of the land use alternatives, and ultimately, updated General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs.

Organization and Content

This report is organized into three sections:

- **Section 1—Introduction.** This section provides an overview of the General Plan Update process, the various documents that will be produced during the update, public input opportunities, and next steps.
- **Section 2—Constraints Analysis.** This section describes major constraints that limit development potential in areas throughout the county.
- **Section 3—Opportunities and Challenges.** This section summarizes major opportunities and challenges facing the county.



Phase 1 workshop participants

Introduction

Relationship to Other General Plan Documents

This report intentionally does not draw conclusions or suggest the manner in which the County should proceed in the development of the General Plan. Rather, it provides a forum to facilitate discussion on important planning and policy issues facing the community. Since it serves only as a foundational tool in the development of future land use alternatives for the General Plan, this report will not be formally adopted by the Board of Supervisors as part of the updated General Plan.

General Plan Update Overview

The County is in the process of updating its 1992 General Plan. The General Plan guides land use, economic, transportation, infrastructure, agricultural, resource, environmental, and other County decisions. The General Plan is intended to provide for orderly growth and convey the community's values and expectations for the future. The updated General Plan will look forward to the year 2035. The County is updating the General Plan in two phases:

Phase I: Public Outreach

From January 2007 to February 2008, the County conducted a community outreach and analysis process as part of Phase I of the General Plan Update. This included significant public outreach, including stakeholder interviews, community workshops, and a community survey. The purpose of Phase I was to identify the themes that will be the focus of the General Plan Update. The overarching themes identified in Phase I include:

- Balancing growth and agricultural preservation
- Protecting natural resources
- Maintaining a place-based identity
- Increasing economic opportunities
- Repairing and expanding infrastructure

Phase 2: General Plan Update

In March 2009 the County initiated Phase 2 of the General Plan update. This phase, which is scheduled to last 30 months, includes a comprehensive update of the 1992 plan. The following paragraphs summarize the two documents that will make up the updated General Plan, as well as the various support documents.

Background Report

The Background Report is a “snapshot” of current conditions and trends in San Benito County. It provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics, such as demographic and economic conditions, land use and development trends, public facilities, and natural resources. The report provides decision-makers, the public, and local agencies with context for making policy decisions. The Background Report will also serve as the description of existing settings in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the General Plan.

Policy Document

The Policy Document is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future decisions within the county and identifies implementation programs that will ensure the goals and policies in the General Plan are carried out. The Policy Document also contains a land use diagram and circulation diagram, which serve as general guides to the distribution of land uses and transportation facilities throughout the county.

General Plan Support Documents

As part of the General Plan Update, the County will prepare several support documents that will serve as building blocks for the Policy Document and analyze the environmental impacts associated with implementing the General Plan. These reports include the following:

- **2035 Vision and Guiding Principles.** This report summarizes the 2035 Vision Statement for San Benito County and the Guiding Principles of the updated General Plan. A vision statement is a summary of general goals to be achieved by the updated General Plan. Guiding principles are more specific and focus on fundamental ideas that represent the County’s

Introduction

philosophy about land use, change, economic development, and sustainability.

- **Opportunities and Challenges Report.** This report identifies key constraints, opportunities, and challenges to be addressed in the General Plan.
- **Alternatives Report.** This report identifies alternative approaches to addressing the various opportunities and challenges throughout the county. The report will evaluate the alternatives for their long-term social, economic, and environmental effects on the county. Ultimately, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will select one or a combination of alternatives as the preferred alternative. Once the preferred alternative is selected, the goals, policies, programs, and land use and circulation diagrams will be developed based on that alternative.
- **Environmental Impact Report.** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the County to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the draft General Plan. The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will use the EIR during the General Plan Update process to understand the potential environmental implications associated with implementing the General Plan.

Please visit the County's General Plan Update website to view and download all available reports:
www.sanbenitogpu.com.

Public Input Opportunities

There are numerous opportunities for the public to follow and participate in the General Plan Update:

Project Website. The County has developed a project website that includes meeting announcements and all materials prepared as part of the update. The website is available at: www.sanbenitogpu.com.

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The GPAC is a committee of county residents who will advise the Board and Commission throughout the update process. The GPAC: reviews and comments on all project documents; makes recommendations on the vision, guiding principles, and alternatives; and helps draft revised and

new policy language. The GPAC will also assist the County in publicizing and encouraging public comment and involvement in this process. All GPAC meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to attend. The GPAC meets regularly every eight weeks. Dates and locations are posted on the project website once they are scheduled.

Community Workshops/Open Houses. The County will hold a series of community workshops at several points in the update process. Dates and locations will be posted on the project website once they are scheduled.

E-Updates. The County will build a database of e-mail addresses and send out e-mails at key points in the process to keep the community current. Please visit the project website for more information.

Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors Study Sessions. The Commission and Board will meet several times during the update process to review milestone products and provide feedback to County staff and consultants. Dates and locations will be posted on the project website once they are scheduled.

Adoption Hearings. The Commission and Board will hold public hearings at the end of the update. These hearings will provide an opportunity for interested parties to provide feedback on the Draft General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) before the plan is adopted.

Next Steps

The County will begin to develop General Plan alternatives based on the information contained in this report. During this stage the County will hold a series of community workshops to solicit feedback on land use and policy alternatives for San Benito County. Please visit the project website to stay informed on upcoming meetings and documents.

Section 2

Constraints Analysis

Introduction

This section identifies development constraints and considerations in San Benito County today (2010). Constraints indicate generally areas where development opportunities are limited to varying degrees. This analysis will assist the County in determining the most appropriate areas for growth and conservation.

This analysis considers three types of constraints: physical; regulatory; and policy. The different types of constraints are also organized based on the following topics:

- Agricultural Resource Constraints
- Biological, Cultural, and Recreational Resource Constraints
- Infrastructure Constraints
- Safety and Hazard Constraints

Constraints Analysis – Introduction

What are Constraints?

Physical Constraints. These include areas that have either posed major safety risks or significantly increase the cost to develop land due to geographic features (e.g., mountains, lakes). Physical constraints are the most easily identifiable limitations to development. Physically constrained lands often have value in that they may provide habitat for endangered species, offer access to open spaces and views, or preserve historic resources.



Regulatory Constraints. These includes areas where Federal and State laws and regulations limit development (or make it cost-prohibitive) and require significant mitigation to offset development impacts (e.g., wetland and endangered species protection). Local regulations also constrain development in areas that pose a threat to the safety and well-being of residents.

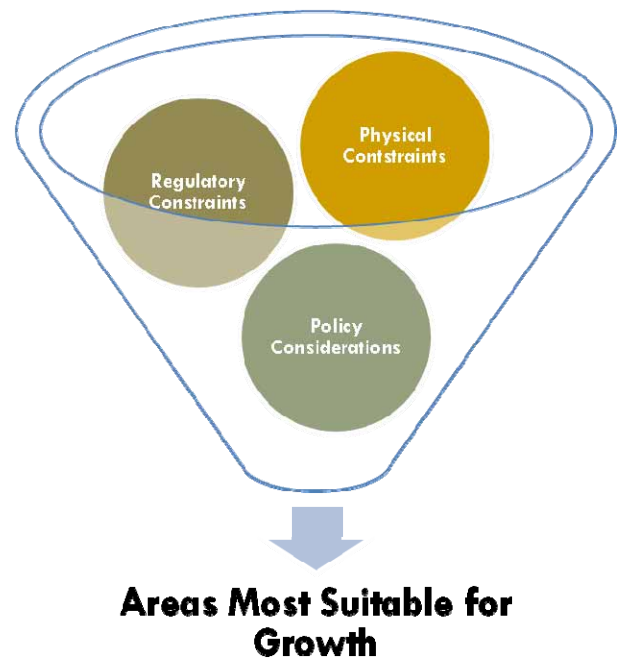


Policy Considerations. These include issues for consideration when planning for new development and are often addressed through local policy. The degree to which these may limit development depends on the terms of those policies.



How to Use this Analysis

The constraints describe major factors that should be considered when thinking about where new growth should occur within the county. Generally, *physical constraints* are the most limiting to development. They create significant obstacles to development or pose major safety concerns that make development, in most cases, infeasible. *Regulatory constraints* can pose significant limits to growth by restricting the location or intensity of development. However, some regulatory constraints can be reduced by mitigating for development impacts. Finally, *policy considerations* do not by themselves limit or constrain development. However, based on local issues, concerns, and direction, policy considerations often determine where development is preferred. This section includes a series of maps and descriptions that summarize major constraints and considerations in the county in four broad categories:




Constraints Analysis – Introduction

Severity Scale

| | Physical Constraints | Regulatory Constraints | Policy Considerations |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Moderate | Railroad rights-of-way Utility transmission lines | Critical habitat Oak woodlands Williamson Act parcels | Farming operations Scenic vistas Sherriff and fire services Transportation access/capacity |
| Significant | Fire hazard Steep slope Water supply | Airport safety zones Cultural and historic resources Endangered/threatened species Fire hazard areas Water supply Water quality Wetlands | Airport areas of influence Noise Prime farmland |
| Severe | Public lands Rivers, lakes, and streams Seismic faults | Flood zones Agricultural easements Conservation easements | Infrastructure capacity Parks |

1) farmland resources; 2) biological, cultural, and recreational resources; 3) infrastructure; and 4) safety and hazards. Each individual constraint is also identified by one of the three symbols shown to the right.

Each of the constraints or considerations includes a rating of the degree to which it limits development. This “severity scale” (shown above) indicates areas that are most impacted based on that constraint. The Composite Constraints diagram (page 16) shows areas of the county that are most suitable or least suitable for growth based on the severity scale.

 *Note: The constraints discussion describes several constraints not included in the maps. The icon to the left identifies constraints shown on the diagrams.*

Physical Constraint

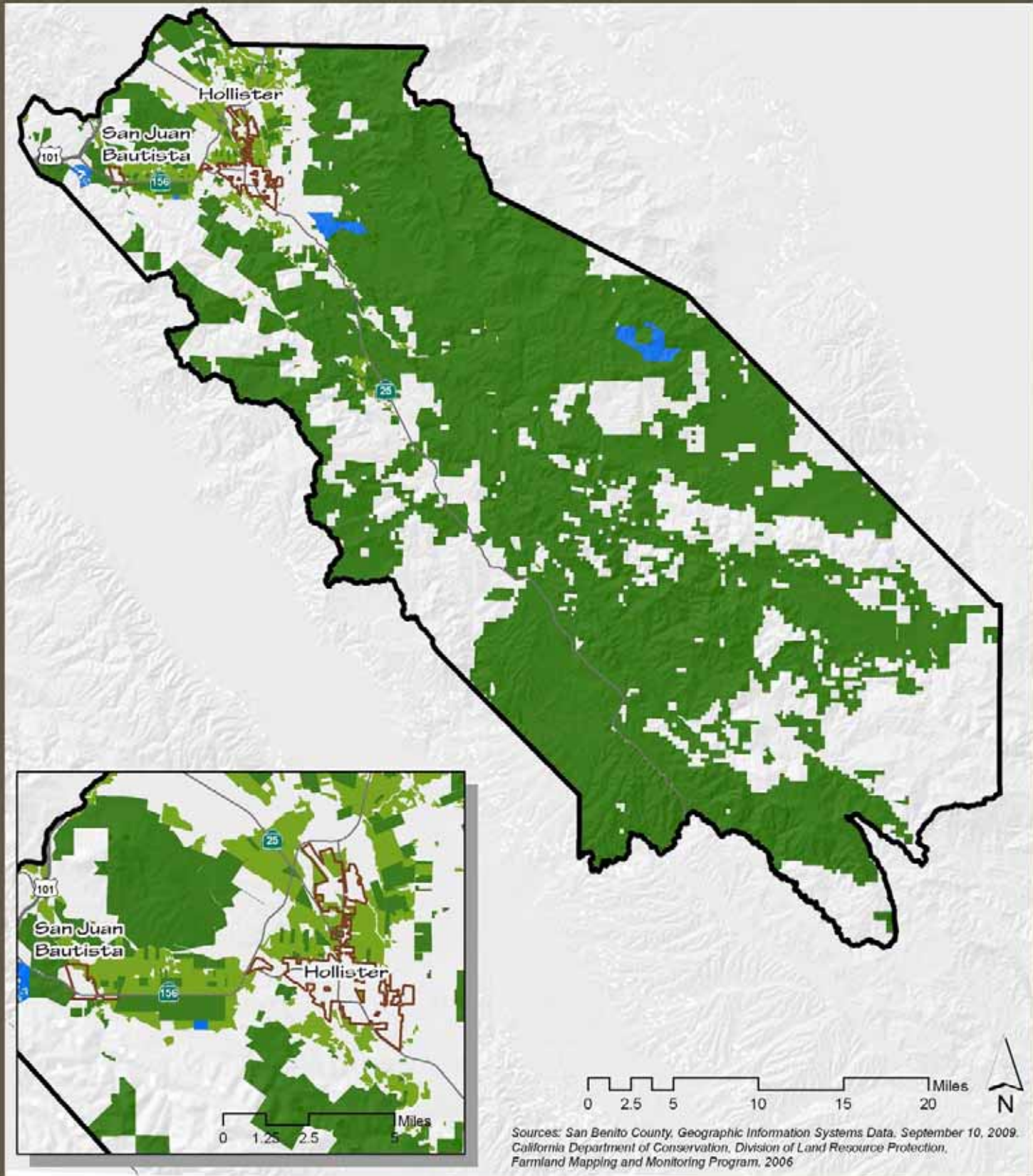


Regulatory Constraint



Policy Consideration







-  County Boundary
-  City Limits
-  Williamson Act Land
-  Prime Farmland
-  Protected Agricultural Lands

Farmland Resources

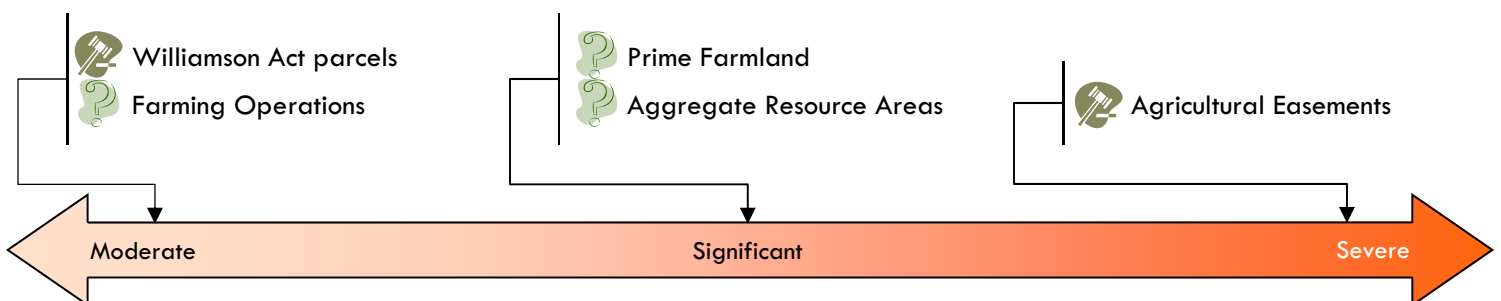
Farmland Resource Constraints

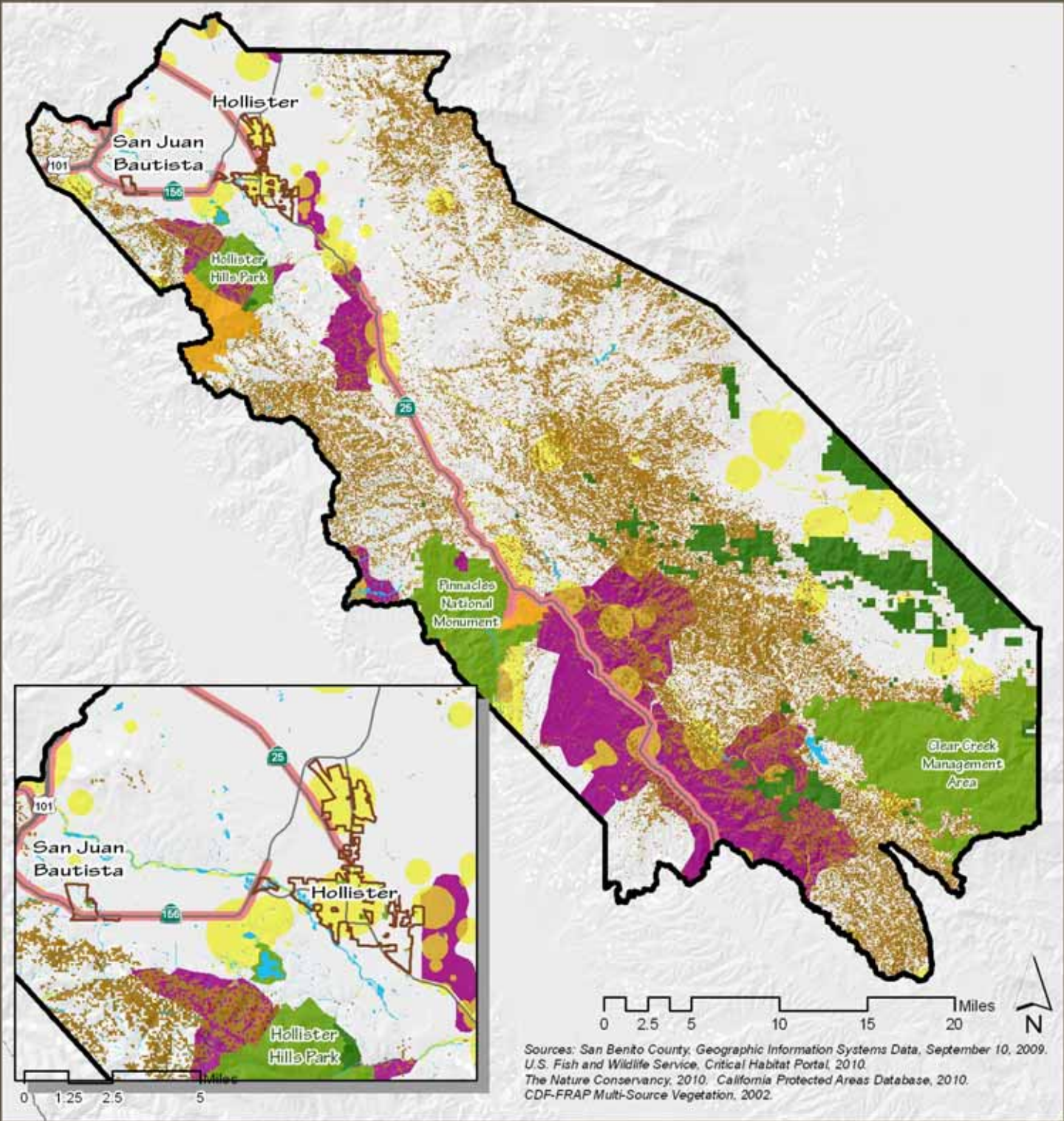
The following discussion addresses constraints and considerations related to agriculture. Regulatory constraints include agricultural easements and Williamson Act parcels. Policy considerations include Prime Farmland and farming operations. There are no physical constraints in this category.

The figure to the left shows areas of the county where development may be affected by agricultural resources. Policy considerations related to farming operations are not mapped. The following provides a brief overview of where these constraints and considerations occur within the county and the impacts of each on development:

- 
Agricultural easements are located throughout the county. These easements protect the continued agricultural use of land in perpetuity. Development within these areas is limited to agriculturally-related physical improvements.
- 
Prime farmland occurs primarily in the northern part of the county adjacent to San Juan Bautista and Hollister. This land is considered unique and of statewide importance due to its high soil quality, agricultural production potential, and economic value.
- Aggregate resource** areas have been identified in the northern part of the county. These are areas where aggregate extraction is currently (2010) being conducted, have potential for mineral extraction, or have known or suspected mineral deposits.
- Williamson Act** contracts exist on agricultural parcels throughout the county. Property owners that participate in the Williamson Act program sign 10-year contracts that require them to give up the right to develop their agricultural land for urban uses during the period of the contract. In exchange, property owners benefit from reduced property tax assessment. Williamson Act Contract lands are particularly extensive in the northern part of the county, including land in the Diablo Mountain Range, Lomerias Muertas/Flint Hills, and Gabilan Range.
- Farming operations** and urban uses often conflict with one another as development extends into agricultural areas. These conflicts are most frequent near cities and urban communities. Farmers often experience increased theft and vandalism, while new inhabitants and businesses are impacted by ongoing farming operations (e.g., noise, dust, spraying).

Relative Degree of Constraints and Considerations





- County Boundary
- City Limits
- Roadways with Scenic Vistas*
- Wetlands
- TNC Easements
- Parks
- Public Lands
- Oak Woodlands
- Protected Species
- Critical Habitat








Biological, Cultural, and Recreational Resource Constraints

* Includes roadways designated by the County as scenic or eligible for State scenic designation.

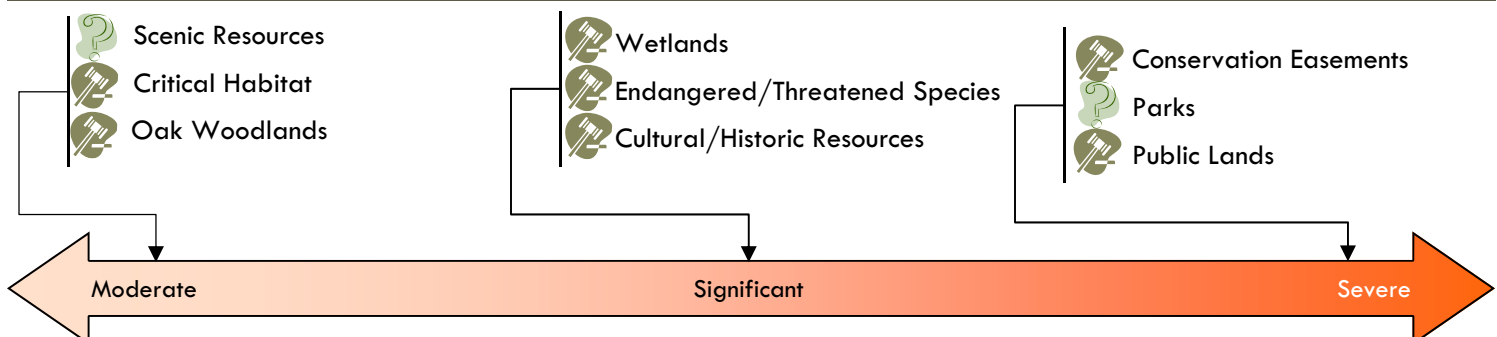
Biological, Cultural, and Recreational Resource Constraints

The following discussion addresses constraints and considerations related to biological and cultural resources. Regulatory constraints include conservation easements, wetlands and vernal pools, endangered and threatened species, oak woodlands, and cultural and historic resources. Policy considerations include scenic resources.

The figure to the right shows areas of the county where development may be limited by biological, cultural, and recreational resources. The following provides a brief overview of where these constraints and considerations occur within the county and the impacts of each on development:

- 
Conservation easements are located throughout the county. These easements protect the availability of habitat areas in perpetuity. Urban development within these areas is prohibited. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is the largest single holder of non-agricultural conservation easements in the county.
- 
Wetlands, located throughout the county, include freshwater sloughs, swamps, vernal pools, wet meadows, wet pastures, and springs and seeps. These areas are protected by Federal and State laws that limit development and require mitigation.
- 
Endangered/threatened species have been found throughout the county and include plants and animals that are protected by Federal and State law. Development in areas where these species reside is limited and subject to mitigation.
- 
Critical Habitat areas are designated by the Federal government and are essential for the conservation of a listed species. While development can occur in areas of critical habitat, it typically requires increased costs due to regulations (e.g., incidental take permit).
- Oak Woodlands**, such as areas with mature Blue Oak Foothill Pine, Blue Oak, and Valley Oak cover parts of western, central, and northeastern areas of the county. The San Benito County Code of Ordinances contains regulations for the conservation and protection of oak woodlands by limiting tree removal.
- Cultural and historic resources** have been found throughout the county and include Native American archeological sites and historic sites from the Mission Period and Early American Period. These areas are protected by Federal and State laws that restrict or limit development and require mitigation.
- 
There are many **scenic resources** in the county. These includes views from roadways designated by the County as scenic, or roadways that have the potential to be designed scenic by the State. These also include the county's natural scenic beauty, such as the various mountain ranges and ridgelines. Development in these areas can diminish their scenic quality.
- 
Parks are valuable recreational resources in the county. The largest parks in the county include the Pinnacles National Monument, the Clear Creek Management Area, and the Hollister Hills Park. These areas are protected resource areas where development is prohibited.
- 
Public lands include property owned by Federal, State, and local agencies. About 15 percent of the unincorporated county is government-owned open space areas, the majority of which is Federally-owned (93 percent). Development on these lands is generally restricted to public uses.

Relative Degree of Constraints and Considerations





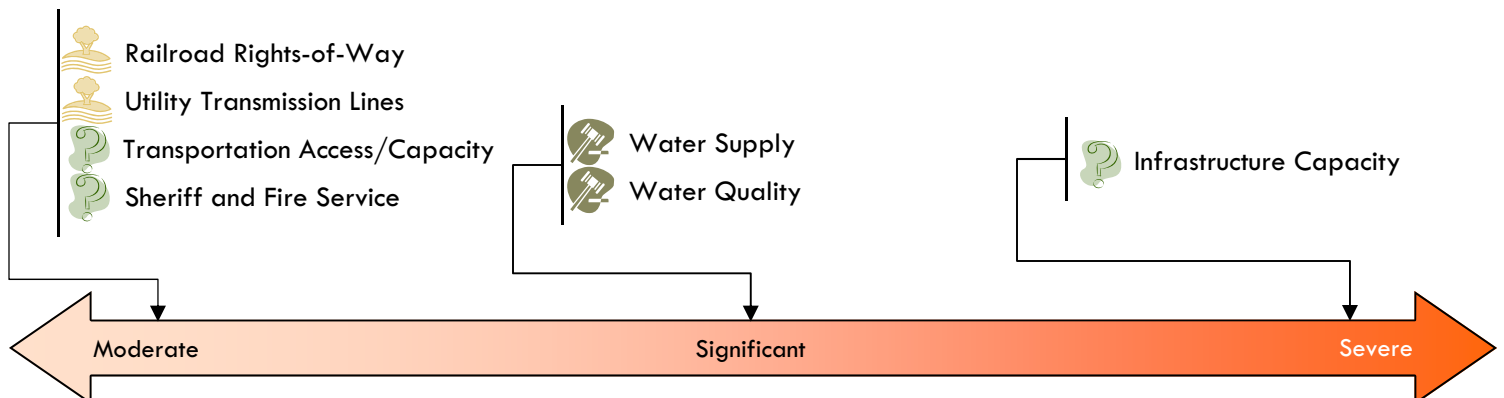
Infrastructure Constraints

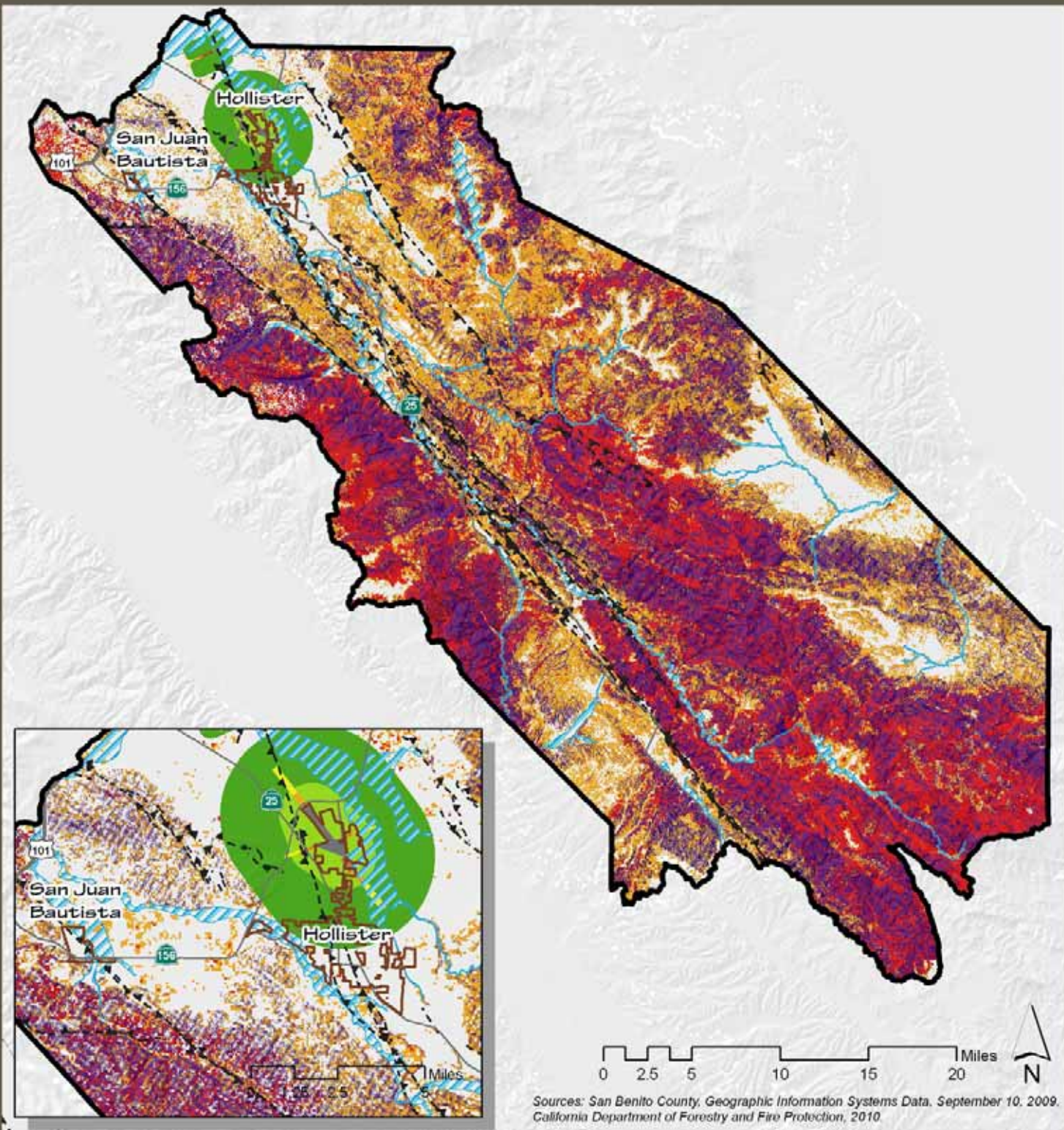
The following discussion addresses constraints and considerations related to infrastructure and public services. Physical constraints include railway rights-of-way, utility transmission lines, and solid waste landfills, while regulatory constraints are limited to water supply and quality. Policy considerations include infrastructure capacity, transportation access and capacity, and Sheriff and fire service.

The following provides a brief overview of where these constraints and considerations occur within the county and the impacts of each on development:

- **Infrastructure capacity** in many unincorporated areas of the county is insufficient to serve new development and will be costly to expand. This limits development in unincorporated areas.
- **Water supply** throughout the county, including surface water and groundwater, must be assessed, per State law, for proposed developments of a certain size. This assessment must be considered when determining whether or not to approve new development.
- **Water quality** laws (State and Federal) protect residents from unsafe drinking water. These laws can restrict or limit development in areas with poor water quality.
- **Railroad right-of-ways** crisscross the county, creating barriers to development, limiting access, and creating potential noise nuisance. Constructing railroad crossings and/or moving railroad alignments for development is very costly.
- **Utility transmission lines**, including electricity, gas, and oil, crisscross the county creating barriers to development and creating safety concerns for adjacent residents (e.g., electromagnetic fields). Moving major transmission alignments for development is very costly.
- **Transportation access and capacity** is necessary to safely and efficiently move people and goods. Roadways and highways at or near capacity limit the potential for new development served by those roads. New development in areas without access to adequate roadways is similarly limited.
- **Sheriff and fire services** ensure that residents, businesses, and properties are safe. New development increases demands for these services, which can reduce the ability to efficiently meet service needs.

Relative Degree of Constraints and Considerations











Sources: San Benito County, Geographic Information Systems Data, September 10, 2009. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2010.



Safety and Hazard Constraints

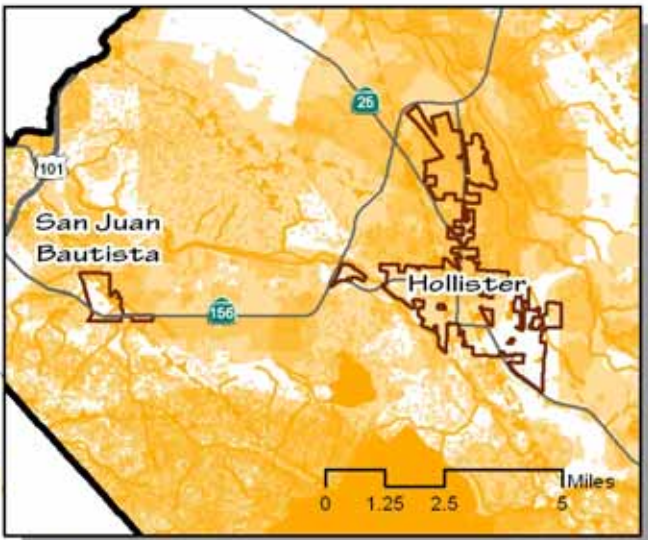
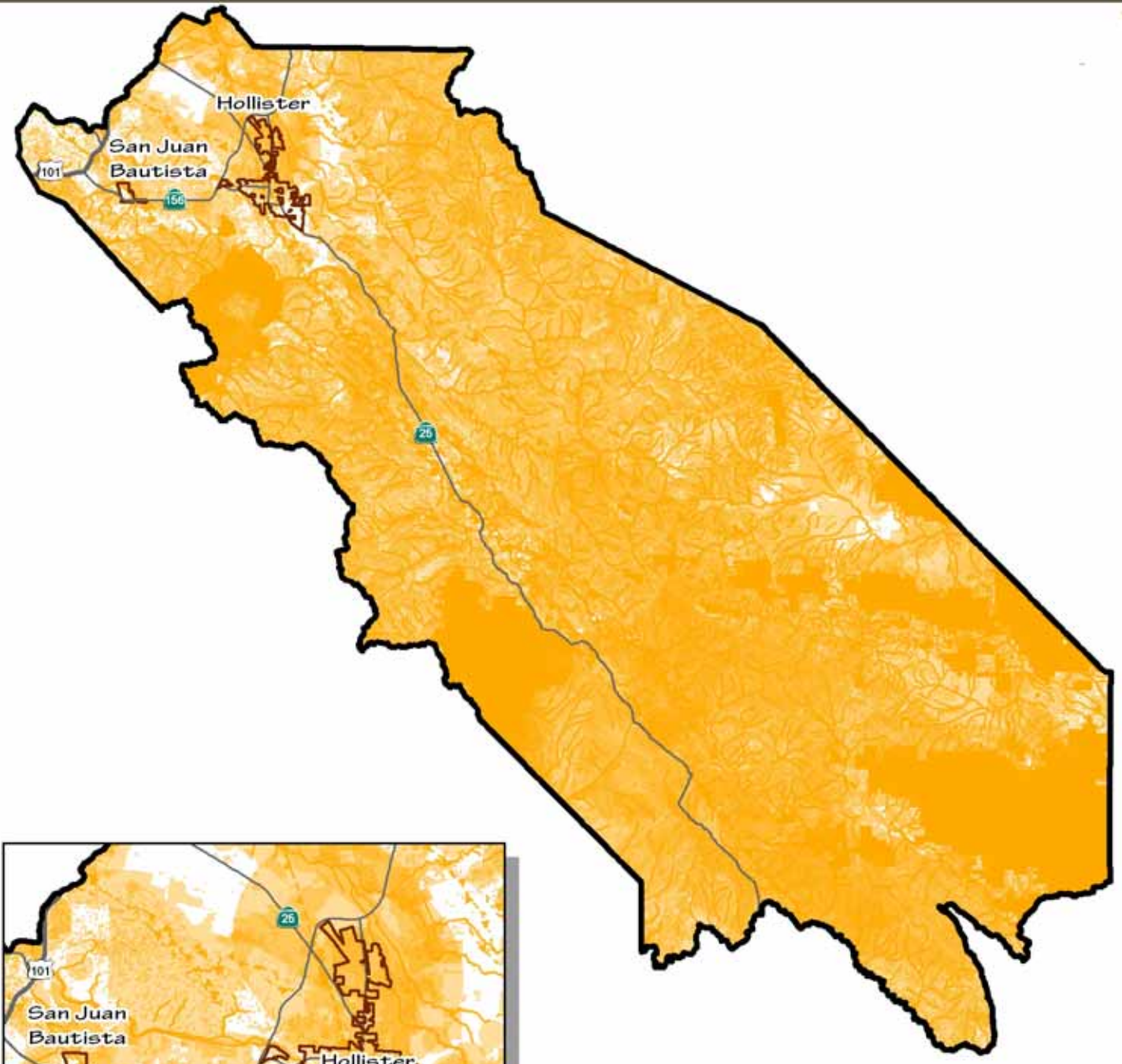
Safety and Hazard Constraints

The following discussion addresses safety and hazard constraints and considerations. Physical constraints include steep slope, while regulatory constraints include airport safety zones, fault lines, and wildland fire hazard areas. Policy considerations include airport areas of influence and noise. The figure to the left shows areas of the county where development may be affected by these safety and hazard concerns. The following provides a brief overview of where these constraints and considerations occur within the county and the impacts of each on development:

- 
Flood zones in the county are primarily cover areas immediately adjacent to river and creek channels. One hundred year floodplains, due to topography, define the area at risk of major flooding once every 100 years. Development in areas protected by levees are subject to special building standards. San Benito County has very little land in floodplains and most of the land subject to flooding within the county is in agricultural use.
- 
Slopes in excess of 15 percent pose a constraint to development and are located throughout the county. Slopes above 30 percent are considered to be a development hazard, and about one-third of the county has average slopes in excess of 30 percent. The majority of the areas with steep slopes are along the two mountain ranges that straddle the county on the west and east, the Gabilan Range and the Diablo Range. Additional areas include the Cienega Del Gabilan, Aromas Hills, and Lomerias Muertas-Flint Hills.
- 
Airport Safety Zones are located around the county's two public airports and limit or restrict development.
- Fire Hazard areas** are located throughout the county in areas with natural vegetation. Fire hazard areas include lands designated by the State as having a high risk for fire. Development in these areas must adhere to regulations governing design, construction, maintenance, and fire service availability. 
- Airport Area of Influence** includes areas designated by the County around its public airports. These areas establish land use regulations that protect airport operations and adjacent developments. 
- High **noise** levels may pose a constraint to some types of development that may be sensitive to noise levels such as homes, hospitals, and schools. Locations of high noise level areas include lands bordering State Routes 25, 129, and 156, US 101, quarries, Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area, and areas near the Hollister Municipal Airport.
- Seismic faults** run diagonally through the entire length of the county. Some of these faults are active, others have had no movement observed on them during recorded history. The San Andreas Fault, the most active of the faults, passes immediately east of San Juan Bautista and emerges at the southern border of the county, approximately 3.5 miles west of Priest Valley. In compliance with the Alquist-Priolo Geologic Hazard Zones Act, the California Division of Mines and Geology has established Special Study Zones along fault traces considered active or potentially active. Special studies relating to earthquakes are required before development within these zones can occur. 

Relative Degree of Constraints and Considerations





Sources: San Benito County, Geographic Information Systems Data, September 10, 2009.

-  County Boundary
-  City Limits
-  More Constrained
-  Less Constrained

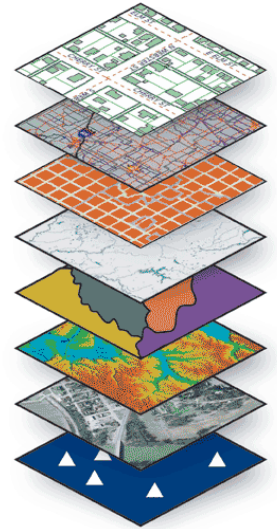
Constraints Composite

Constraints Composite

The following discussion addresses the combined effect of the constraints and considerations discussed in previous pages. San Benito County has numerous physical and regulatory constraints and policy considerations. The Composite Constraints diagram to the left illustrates the combined magnitude of the constraints and considerations that should be evaluated and weighed when addressing future development.

The Composite Constraints diagram only shows the mapped constraints and considerations. As noted in each of the previous topical discussions, many unmapped constraints and considerations also influence where development can or should occur.

As shown on the map, the areas with the fewest development constraints tend to be located in or adjacent to the cities in the northern part of the county.



Unmapped Constraints/Considerations

- 200-year Floodplain
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Farming Operations
- Infrastructure Capacity
- Railroad Right-of-Way
- Sheriff and Fire Services
- Transportation Access and Capacity
- Utility Transmission Lines
- Water Supply
- Water Quality

Mapped Constraints/Considerations

- 100-year Floodplain
- Agricultural Easements
- Airport Areas of Influence
- Airport Safety Zones
- Conservation Easements
- Critical Habitat
- Endangered and Threatened Species
- Fire Hazard Areas
- Noise
- Oak Woodlands
- Parks
- Prime Farmland
- Public Lands
- Rivers, Lakes, and Streams
- Scenic Vistas
- Seismic Faults
- Slopes
- Wetlands
- Williamson Act Contracts

Section 3

Opportunities and Challenges

Introduction

This section summarizes major opportunities and challenges that have policy implications for San Benito County during the General Plan Update process. While there are numerous issues that must be addressed during the update process, this section looks specifically at major economic development, land use, agriculture, transportation, public facility, resource, recreation, and sustainability topics.

Each opportunity and challenge is summarized based on the following three questions:

1. What is the topic (definition)?
2. Why is the topic important to San Benito County?
3. What are some options for addressing the topic in the General Plan?

What is an Opportunity?

An “Opportunity” is defined as a unique, favorable, or advantageous condition within the county that the County can capitalize on through the General Plan Update process.

What is a Challenge?

A “Challenge” is defined as an important unsettled matter or problem that needs to be addressed through the General Plan Update process.



Opportunities are identified in green text boxes.



Challenges are identified in blue text boxes.

Economic Development Opportunities

Commercial Sites and Corridors

Developing key commercial sites and corridors provides an important opportunity for economic growth in the county. The county has the benefit of being located along two major regional thoroughfares: US 101 running north/south and SRs 152 and 156 running east/west. Caltrans is currently (2010) planning to construct a new freeway interchange along US 101 in San Benito County, very close to the Monterey County border. The completion of this interchange will facilitate commercial development on the relatively flat portion of the land between US 101 and the hills to the east. While the county has not traditionally seen growth in regional commercial (i.e., freeway-oriented), this could be an opportunity to capture a larger share of this market. The County has the opportunity to look at appropriate commercial sites and analyze their potential for economic development.

New Hotels and/or Convention Center

San Benito County currently (2010) has a very modest hotel sector, but this sector brings important visitor dollars into the county to support local jobs and it generates much needed lodging tax revenue. There are three potential markets the county could capitalize on to attract future hotels and even a convention center:

- **Business Hotels.** Hotels serving a business clientele will continue to locate in and around Hollister near the existing hotels. The demand forecast is 150 to 200 units in three of four properties over the next 25 years based on AMBAG's population and employment forecasts.
- **Regional Traveler Hotels.** Hotels located at US 101 interchanges are also likely. These hotels would serve the overflow from the Monterey Peninsula during peak tourist season, provide convenient lodging accommodations for travelers on Highway 101, and serve historic San Juan Bautista. The demand forecast is 80 to 120 rooms at either the Highway 101/State Route 156 interchange or the new Rocks Ranch interchange near the Monterey County line.
- **Boutique Resorts/B&Bs.** Boutique resorts and bed and breakfast inns associated with the wine

industry are another opportunity area for lodging development. The Kenwood Inn and Spa or the Healdsburg Inn in Sonoma County are examples of this type of lodge development that are small in scale but charge very high room rates on weekends. The demand forecast indicates 150 to 160 rooms in multiple properties over 25 years.

Wine Industry

The county has a long history in the wine industry dating back to 1854. Almaden Vineyards dominated the county's vineyards with 4,500 acres during its peak in the 1970s. This industry suffered when Almaden sales declined and its new owner moved the local operation to Madera in the Central Valley. Since then, several smaller wineries are having some success in the four viticulture areas of Paicines, Cienega, Mt. Harlan, and Lime Kiln Valley. The continued expansion of the wine tourism industry will generate job growth and sales/hotel tax revenue for the County from wineries selling directly to consumers and new tourist accommodations. The San Benito Wine Trail and various wine-related events continue to attract visitors to the county's wine region.

Tourism

Because it is adjacent to Monterey County and near the six million plus Bay Area residents, San Benito County has opportunities to expand its tourism sector. San Benito County could benefit from creating destination-type tourist attractions. The county's tourism assets include a beautiful natural setting, the historic town of San Juan Bautista, a growing wine industry and organic farming industry, scenic drives, and several State parks. The agricultural industry is also one of the county's distinctive features, providing the opportunity to develop and expand agritourism, such as the wine trail. The County could promote tourism by creating a visitors' bureau and through appropriate signs along roadways.

Economic Development Challenges

Jobs/Housing Balance

While proximity to the Silicon Valley, in some ways, creates opportunities for economic development, it also represents a major challenge. Since 1992 Silicon Valley has created 250,000 jobs, but only 50,000 housing units, according to the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, resulting in exorbitant real estate prices in the Silicon Valley. The relatively inexpensive land in San Benito County has created pressures for the county to serve as a bedroom community for workers in the Silicon Valley. At the same time, attracting high-tech, high-wage jobs to San Benito County is a challenge with the competition from surrounding counties. The County can develop policies and incentives to encourage companies with high-paying jobs to locate in the county, particularly in Hollister near downtown and the airport.

Unemployment

Historically, San Benito County has had the highest unemployment rates in the region because of its limited economic diversification. Unemployment strains both individuals and County government, which is responsible for providing unemployment and welfare services and support. Unemployment can also lead to mortgage defaults, bankruptcies, job skill loss, and homelessness. The current national and global economic downturn has exacerbated unemployment in the county, and it will likely take several years to recover.



Land Use Opportunities

Growth Management

Both the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista have growth management ordinances or programs to limit the number of new residential units. Hollister restricts the number of new residential units that can be constructed each year to 244, 40 of which need to be available for low- and very-low income housing. Similarly, San Juan Bautista implemented a Residential Development Control System in the 1970s to limit increases in the city's housing stock based on a variety of factors such as infrastructure, public service availability, and projected growth rates. In 2007 the residents of San Juan Bautista voted for a Growth Management Ordinance (GMO) that limits new residential growth to 3 percent per year (i.e., Measure B). However, in 2009 the San Benito County Superior Court declared the GMO unlawful and unenforceable.

The City of Hollister General Plan calls for the City to develop and adopt a San Benito County/City of Hollister urban growth management agreement. The objective of the agreement would be to have the County direct future urban growth to existing urban areas in an effort to enhance the viability of agriculture and to limit the conversion of agricultural land to other uses. Probably the largest issue that will be addressed by the County during the General Plan update is how to accommodate projected growth while preserving the quality of life in the county.

Transfer of Development Credit Program

Transfer of development credits (TDC) is a land use tool that uses market forces to encourage the transfer of development potential away from areas that a community wants to preserve and into areas that are considered more appropriate for development. This allows the private sector to help in the County's preservation efforts. San Benito County formed a TDC Committee, which explored options for developing a TDC program. The County is currently (Summer 2010) in the process of drafting a TDC ordinance. Similarly, the General Plan update will look at ways to support this program through policies and possibly the identification of sending and receiving areas for development credits.

Regional Blueprint

The Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) is currently preparing a Monterey Bay Regional Blueprint. This is a collaborative regional growth and conservation strategy for the communities of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties. The Regional Blueprint focuses on coordinating transportation in order to improve mobility and accessibility, identifying areas to house the region's existing and future populations, and preserving important agriculture and conservation areas. The result of the Regional Blueprint will be a vision and preferred land use pattern that maximizes existing land and transportation infrastructure to accommodate future growth. The County is coordinating the General Plan Update with the Regional Blueprint in order to ensure compatibility between the two plans in terms of planning for future roadways, affordable housing, and sustainability.

Cluster Development

Over the past decade the county has seen a large amount of rural residential developments (e.g., homes on 1/2 acre lots). While these provided a needed housing type, they also pose significant issues— primarily with the loss of prime agricultural land on the valley floor. Cluster development is one way to achieve rural residential housing while minimizing impacts on agriculture. This includes planned unit developments (PUDs) that cluster housing on part of a large lot in order to allow the remainder of the lot to be used for agriculture or preserved as open space. The County will look at opportunities and incentives to either require or encourage cluster developments in the future.

Land Use Challenges

Residential Ranchettes (Existing Five-Acre Zoning)

Residential ranchettes are typically one home on two- to five-acre lots. While the purpose of the Agricultural Productive (AP) zone in the county is to “provide for areas within the county to be used for agricultural production of any type as set forth in the general plan,” the minimum parcel requirement on most of these acres is five acres. This could serve to fragment agricultural land by allowing rural ranchettes. The same is true of the County’s Rural (R) zone, which also requires a minimum parcel size of five acres. Combined, these two zones could accommodate approximately 14,000 units. The County will need to address ways to provide housing choices while also protecting agriculture and opens space resources.

Lack of Complete Neighborhoods

The “completeness” of a neighborhood refers to the extent to which daily and weekly needs can be met close to home. This includes having schools, neighborhood commercial, and recreation opportunities within a close distance to where people live, typically 1/4 to 1/2 mile. Many existing unincorporated communities in the county do have these services near housing while many do not. The County will be looking at ways to create complete neighborhoods, while also preserving the rural character that drew residents to these communities.

Agricultural Opportunities

Agricultural Economy Diversification

Agricultural diversification is the re-allocation of productive resources, such as land, capital, equipment, and labor, into new activities. This can include new crops or livestock products, value-adding activities, or non-farming commercial activities such as wine tasting, restaurants, and stores. Agriculture in San Benito County is currently (2010) a \$300 million annual industry. The county has the opportunity to stimulate the agricultural economy by supporting the development of new value-added products, new markets, and new technologies. One particular option for the county is organic farming. In 2005 San Benito County was the 12th largest producer by volume, and 3rd largest by commodity sale, of organic agriculture in the state.



Photo by Rene Rodriguez

Agriculture Exclusive Zoning

Agriculture exclusive zoning is a tool used to preserve agricultural land by ensuring that the uses allowed in a zone are limited to agriculture. The more widely used and less restrictive is nonexclusive agricultural zoning, which recognizes agriculture production as the preferred use in certain areas, but does not prohibit other land uses in the agriculturally-zoned area. Exclusive agricultural zoning is more restrictive and typically prohibits non-farm residences, non-agriculture activities, and agriculture-related retail businesses. Options for the County include developing one or more agricultural zones that help protect the most important farming areas.

Agricultural Easements

Agricultural easements are voluntary contracts that combine landowner compensation with regulation. Landowners voluntarily sell their future development rights for cash, tax benefits, or a mix of both, keeping all other rights of ownership. Typically, the economic benefit of an easement is the difference between its value in agricultural use and its development potential market value. Landowners negotiate terms and sell their easements to government agencies or nonprofit land trusts, which are then responsible for monitoring parcel use to ensure compliance with the easement terms. Legally recorded in property deeds, easements run with the land and are not affected by ownership changes.

Easements are an effective option because they tend to be the most enduring and definitive form of avoiding urbanization and keeping land in productive farming. Currently (2010), the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust permanently protects 5,454 acres of working ranches and farms in the county. Options for the County include encouraging additional agricultural easements and/or directly involved in their purchase, monitoring, and implementation.



Photo by Rene Rodriguez

Agricultural Challenges

Loss of Prime Farmland

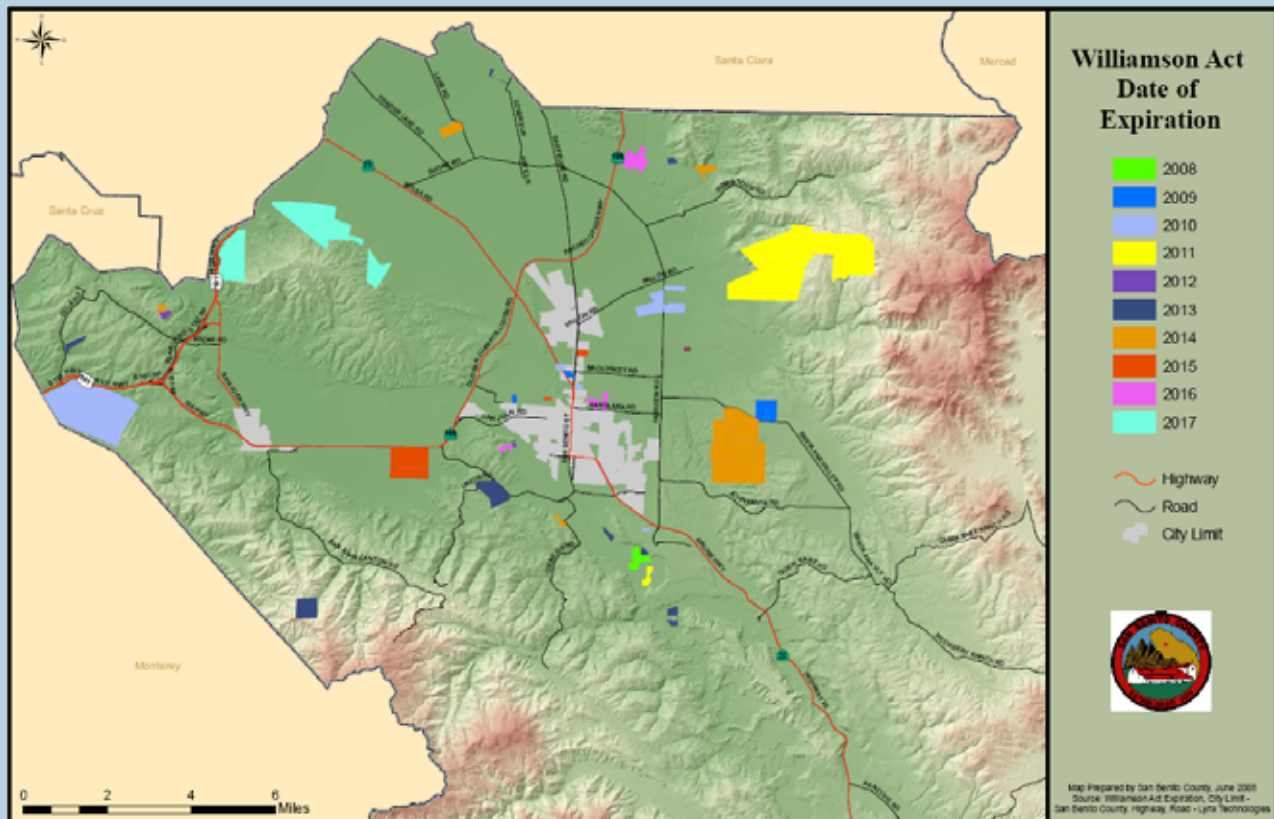
Prime farmland is a State land classification based on a parcels soil quality and history in farming. Prime farmland is concentrated in the San Juan Valley to the north and east of San Juan Bautista and in the Bolsa Valley to the north of Hollister. This includes areas that have physical characteristics (e.g., flat, well-drained) that also make them ideal for urban development. For this reason prime farmland has been dramatically affected by the conversion to urban use. From 1990 to 2004 almost half of the land that was converted to urban uses in the county was prime farmland. The main option for the County to preserve remaining prime farmland is to develop more restrictive policies that prevent it from being converted to non-agricultural uses.

Williamson Act Contract Non-Renewals and Funding Losses

Similar to conservation easements, the Williamson Act program is a voluntary program that combines compensation with regulation. In return for reduced

property taxes, based on the value of agricultural use rather than open land market prices, farm owners agree to maintain their land in agricultural production for a minimum period of time. Unlike conservation easements, Williamson Act contracts last for 10 years and are automatically renewed every year unless deliberately terminated.

A major issue with Williamson Act contracts is that they can end. In 2007 the county had 82 properties containing 8,675 acres listed as non-renewals. In addition to non-renewals, the State is currently (2010) dramatically reducing Williamson Act subvention payments to local government as a result of the ongoing budget crisis. Options for the County to continue the Williamson Act program include finding funding from sources other than the State, establishing an exclusively County-funded program, and/or encouraging longer time frames for contracts (e.g., 20 years).



Transportation Opportunities

Increased Transit

Well-used public transit reduces traffic congestion, helps improve air quality, and provides essential services to youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Increasing the availability of public transit can also provide economic benefits to the county and its residents. San Benito County Express is the primary transit provider in the county, providing bus transit services in Hollister and countywide intercity connections. The County has the option to encourage additional bus service to facilitate shopping in Hollister, for example. The County can also increase transit access by requiring new developments at urban densities to dedicate funding for new transit stops and be designed to allow easy access to public transit where existing service is available.

Light Rail/High-Speed Rail Connections

In 2008 California voters approved a \$9 billion bond to plan a high-speed rail line. The California High-Speed Rail Authority is now planning and designing a high speed rail line that will run between southern California and the Bay Area via the Pacheco Pass. Tentatively, there is a station planned for Gilroy. The County has the option to look at ways to connect Hollister with Gilroy through either bus or light rail transit. There is an existing rail line that could be used; however, it would need some upgrading to make it safe for transit use and is also located near existing, non-compatible land uses.

Airport Expansion

The proximity of the Hollister Airport to the Silicon Valley, the location at the outskirts of the city, and the availability of surrounding land to support new commercial and industrial growth provide an opportunity to expand the airport and provide corporate jet service. This would not only increase options for air travel, but could also serve as a catalyst for economic development in the county. The County can look at ways to partner with the City of Hollister to facilitate expansion of the airport.



Photos by the San Benito County Local Transportation Authority



Transportation Challenges

Employee Commute Patterns

A significant portion of county residents commute to other counties for work. This indicates either a shortage of jobs or lack of acceptable wages within the county to serve the current population. Employee commuting places a significant burden on the highway system and principal arterial connections between San Benito County and adjacent counties.

In 2000 over 91 percent of San Benito residents either carpooled or drove to work compared with 86 percent statewide. Only 1.3 percent of employed residents in the county take transit to work compared with 5 percent statewide. In 2000 a greater proportion of San Benito County's employed residents had either relatively short or very long commutes compared to the state. Approximately 35 percent had commute times less than

14 minutes, compared to 28 percent statewide, and over 30 percent had commutes times over 45 minutes, compared to 18 percent statewide.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

There were an estimated total of 1,394,030 daily vehicle miles of travel (DVMT) within San Benito County each day in 2007.



Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) is one of the challenges that the County must face in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) consistent with State requirements (AB 32). VMT can be reduced through improved coordination between regional transportation and local land use planning, which facilitates changes in travel behavior.

Where do Hollister & San Juan Bautista residents WORK?

Number of employees traveling from the City of Hollister and the City of San Juan Bautista per Census Block, 2008

Legend

City of Hollister Residents

- 1 to 2 employees
- 3 to 5 employees
- 6 or more employees

City of San Juan Bautista Residents

- 1 to 2 employees
- 3 to 5 employees
- 6 or more employees

- Limited Access
- Highway
- Major Road
- City Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Urban and Built-Up Land
- Farmland
- Local, State and National Parks



Date: June 2010
Data Source: AMBAG, EA Dept of Conservation, Farmland Planning and Monitoring Program
BIPOLC, Science Bureau

City of Hollister

Share of Jobs by City/Place Distance to Hollister

| City/Place | Number of Jobs | Share of Jobs (%) | Distance to Hollister (miles) |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hollister | 4,005 | 29% | 0-4 |
| Gilroy | 1,243 | 9% | 16 |
| Salinas | 760 | 6% | 32 |
| San Jose | 744 | 5% | 47 |
| Morgan Hill | 532 | 4% | 26 |
| Watsonville | 394 | 3% | 26 |
| Santa Cruz | 187 | 1% | 45 |
| Monterey | 184 | 1% | 40 |
| San Francisco | 146 | 1% | 95 |
| Prunedale | 126 | 1% | 20 |
| All Other Locations | 5,551 | 40% | |

Data Source: US Census Bureau, Location Employment Dynamics (LED) Database

SAN BENITO COUNTY AND SURROUNDING AREAS

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Source: AMBAG

Public Facilities and Services Opportunities

School Expansion

A significant percentage of Gavilan College students and staff live in San Benito County, and the district has long-term plans to build a college campus on district-owned land in Hollister. In order to qualify for construction funding, the district must expand college services in San Benito County to serve the equivalent of 500 full-time students. The current location at the Briggs Building is at capacity, serving the equivalent of 230 full-time students. Therefore, Gavilan College is seeking a location for expansion in Hollister that will be available for the next 15-20 years. This future expansion of Gavilan College will provide additional educational and career opportunities for San Benito County residents.

Communications Infrastructure

AT&T and SBC provide telecommunications services to the county. A variety of internet providers, such as AT&T and Comcast, provide DSL and wireless service.



However, the availability of high-speed internet service is limited in the rural areas of the county. Broadband access is critical to attracting new industries and employers to the county. High capacity broadband access is a relatively new type of infrastructure, and the County has the opportunity to encourage private-sector investment and leverage public-private partnerships.

Water Conservation

Conservation is becoming an increasingly important strategy to reduce water demand. The use of recycled water for agricultural and landscape irrigation is expected to increase in the future. Although opportunities have been limited due to infrastructure limitations and water quality concerns, the City of Hollister and the San Benito County Water District are working together to develop this resource. Water service providers in the county also encourage conservation by offering various programs to their customers.

Low-Impact Development

Low-impact development (LID) is an approach to land development, or redevelopment, that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features and minimizing impervious surfaces to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than as a waste product. There are many practices that have been developed based on these principles such as bio-swales, bio-retention facilities, rain gardens, vegetated rooftops, rain barrels, and permeable pavements. By implementing LID principles and practices, water can be managed in a way that reduces the impact of built areas and promotes the natural movement of water within an ecosystem or watershed. LID has received support from the Water Environment Research Foundation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). LID is being promoted as a method to help meet goals of the Clean Water Act. The County can use LID techniques to promote more efficient development while protecting habitat and natural resources, improving water quality, reducing localized flooding, recharging the groundwater basin, and reducing infrastructure development and maintenance costs.



Public Facilities and Services Challenges

Water Supply and Quality

Water supply and quality is a critical concern for San Benito County, both for surface water and groundwater. Groundwater is the primary source of water supply. The groundwater basin is recharged through natural surface water as well as water imported by the San Benito County Water District (SBCWD) through the Federal Central Valley Project (CVP). Given the uncertain reliability of CVP water, the likelihood of repeated drought, and the probability of climate change, management of groundwater levels and storage for long-term sustainable supply is a major challenge. Management of groundwater levels also can minimize high groundwater levels that are problematic for agriculture, maintain basin outflow to minimize salt loading, and support stream flow and associated habitat. The local hydrogeology is a complicating factor. In response, SBCWD is improving its monitoring network, conducting hydrogeologic investigations, and planning projects to manage groundwater levels and storage. The condition of the Delta is also of major concern, and future regulatory changes will impact water supply in the county.



Sheriff Response Times

Quickly responding to emergencies is one of the most important safety challenges in San Benito County. The time it takes for a deputy to respond to a call is referred to as the “response time.” Factors that affect response times include the number of deputies on duty, the size of the patrol area, the density of the population served, the distance to the call, the level of traffic congestion, and the number of incidents occurring at the same time. Rapid response times are difficult to maintain in rural areas where residents are spread out.

Stormwater

The relative lack of development pressure and availability of land resources in unincorporated areas of the county have minimized stormwater management issues to-date, but in the future, the resource constraints and regulatory considerations may be more restrictive. The County can plan for the financing and construction of future stormwater systems to protect existing and new communities.



Natural and Cultural Resources Opportunities

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are one tool to ensure the continued protection of important open space and natural resource areas. They create a legally enforceable land preservation agreement between the landowner and the easement holder, often a non-profit organization such as a land trust. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is one of the largest land trusts both nationally and in the state of California.

Conservation easements are becoming increasingly popular with ranch families across California and the West that are looking to protect their land from the effects of rural sprawl. Once the development rights are sold, the assessed value of the property will generally decrease, resulting in decreased property taxes. This reduces the risk that future generations that inherit the land will have to sell the land in order to pay the inheritance tax.

A recent example of a conservation easement in San Benito County is the Gabilan Ranch, located south of the Santa Clara county line near San Juan Bautista. The landowners of the Ranch sold their development rights to TNC to ensure that the property remains undeveloped. The deal, which covers 11,190 acres, was one of the largest conservation easements ever established in Northern California. The County has the ability to encourage more conservation easements to help protect valuable natural resources.

Cultural Resources

Approximately 3 percent of the county has been systematically surveyed for cultural resources. Therefore, it is likely that many prehistoric sites, historic remains, and paleontological resources could be found on the surface as well as underground aquifers throughout the county, particularly in riparian (streamside or riverside) settings and on adjacent elevated landforms.

San Benito County is rich in prehistoric and historic sites as well as paleontological resources. It is important that the County's cultural resources program include the education of project participants, agency representatives, and concerned citizens regarding the

laws, codes, and ordinances that forbid collecting of items associated with archeological, historical, and paleontological sites, particularly artifacts or other objects found in association with human remains.



Photo by Gabilan Ranch



Photo by Gabilan Ranch

Natural and Cultural Resources Challenges

Scenic Resources

Growth in the county has begun to convert scenic landscapes to urban development, degrading scenic resources that have recreation, aesthetic, wildlife protection, and community character values. This landscape conversion has occurred primarily in the northern part of the county, close to the Santa Clara county line near US 101.

There are currently (2010) no County regulations or design guidelines, other than the General Plan goals and policies, related to scenic resources and the lighting, sign ordinance, and landscape standards, that govern uses or the visual quality of the County-designated scenic roadways or the built environment. The County has the opportunity to protect scenic resources through stronger policies and programs.

Asbestos

In the South County area, asbestos is being mined by King City Asbestos Company in their "Joe Pit." These resources are located in Sections 23 through 25 of Township 18 South and Range 12 East (ERCI 1996). The Joe Pit was listed as an AB 3098-regulated mining operation as recently as 2004. The asbestos mine is a health and safety hazard.

In addition, naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) is likely to be found in the southern part of the county. The Environmental Protection Agency issued the Clear Creek Management Area an Asbestos Exposure and Human Health Risk Assessment in 2008, which concluded that adults and children visiting the CCMA more than once per year could be exposed to carcinogens such as asbestos above EPA acceptable levels. Since release of the EPA report, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a temporary closure order on 30,000 acres within the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The County must ensure the public is safe from the harmful effects of health and safety issues, including naturally-occurring asbestos.

Abandoned Mines

There are several abandoned mine sites within the county, including five within the Clear Creek Management Area (Aurora, Alpine, Jade Hill, Xanadu, Larcious). In addition, the New Idria Mine is listed by the Office of Mining Resources as a chemical risk site and is also a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) site. The mine, while remote, is an issue for the county because of its environmental hazards. The mine produced mercury for almost a half a century. In May 2003, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors sent a proposal to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board requesting investigation, cleanup, and abatement of the pollutants discharged from New Idria.



Photo by Rene Rodriguez



Photo by Rene Rodriguez

Recreation Opportunities

Parks

Park and recreation facilities have historically ranked high on the list of community needs for San Benito County residents. There are many large State- and Federally-managed parks in the county. These facilities provide economic, health, and open space benefits to county residents. The County has the opportunity to plan for and develop more parkland as part of the General Plan Update, including using the vast passive parklands as a way to draw additional ecotourism to the county.

Bike, Pedestrian, and Equestrian Trail Expansion

Bike, pedestrian, and equestrian trails provide numerous recreational opportunities for county residents. Trails help promote healthy, active living and can reduce automobile dependence. Bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian facilities in the unincorporated areas of county are generally discontinuous or non-existent. Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail traverses San Juan Bautista and the western part of the county. Near Tres Pinos a multi-use path connects Tres Pinos Elementary School with the community of Tres Pinos. The County has the option to expand opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists by requiring dedication and construction of sidewalks and bicycle lanes within large-scale developments or within the vicinity of concentrations of population. The County can also work to purchase and dedicate public right-of-way for new trails.



Public/Private Partnerships

New park facilities require substantial up-front costs, including site acquisition, design, and construction. There are opportunities, however, for the County to partner with private companies to fund the creation of new parks through a reimbursement agreement or have private companies maintain and run County parks.

The County can benefit from these partnerships in many ways, including decreased funding for capital projects, easier replacement for aging facilities, and reduced operating costs. However, there are some drawbacks. Many agencies enter into partnerships during economic down times and find out that both economic and human resources to undergo large projects have been reduced.

Recreation Challenges

Lack of Active Parkland

While the majority of county residents has access to a variety of passive recreational facilities, such as open space, recreational vehicular parks, and historical parks, residents do not have active park facilities, such as pools and sport fields. The unincorporated population is anticipated to grow by approximately 27,000 by the year 2035. In order to meet the County park standard of a minimum ratio of 5.0 acres per 1,000 people, a total of approximately 135 additional acres of developed regional parkland will be needed.



Photo by Rene Rodriguez

Sustainability Opportunities

Efficient Development

When taking into account transportation and electricity use, the built environment makes up a significant portion of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The majority of development expected to be on the ground statewide in 2050 is not yet built. This presents a huge opportunity to reduce GHG emissions.

Efficiency of the built environment refers not only to the type of building materials, but also the density and location of development. Enforcing green building practices can reduce electricity and other energy consumption, in turn reducing GHG emissions. Creating higher-density, mixed-use, and more walkable communities in existing urban areas can also reduce GHG emissions by reducing dependence on automobile travel.

The Monterey Regional Blueprint process, discussed earlier in the Land Use Opportunities section, focuses on coordinating land use and transportation decisions, and protecting agriculture and conservation areas. The principles of the Regional Blueprint support the reduction of GHG through more efficient land use patterns and reduced vehicle miles traveled. The County is coordinating its planning efforts with AMBAG in order to promote more efficient land use patterns in the future.

Carbon Sequestration

Carbon sequestration is a strategy to remove and store carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and is one of the earth's only mechanisms to remove GHG emissions from the atmosphere. Agriculture can play a key role in the County's strategy to address climate change by serving as a "sink" for CO₂. Changes in agricultural management can also potentially increase the accumulation rate of carbon in soils that results in sequestering CO₂ from the atmosphere. For example, agricultural carbon sinks can be developed by switching from row crops to orchards or pastures, employing managed grazing, using less intensive tillage, and retiring land. However, the amount of carbon sequestered by a specific farming practice depends on the history of the land and the soil type. In addition, carbon sequestered in agricultural lands may be

released when agricultural practices are changed. It should also be noted that annual row cropping is not a sink, but part of the short-term carbon cycle, and the conversion from row crops to vines or trees can reduce habitat and require a permanent source of irrigation water.

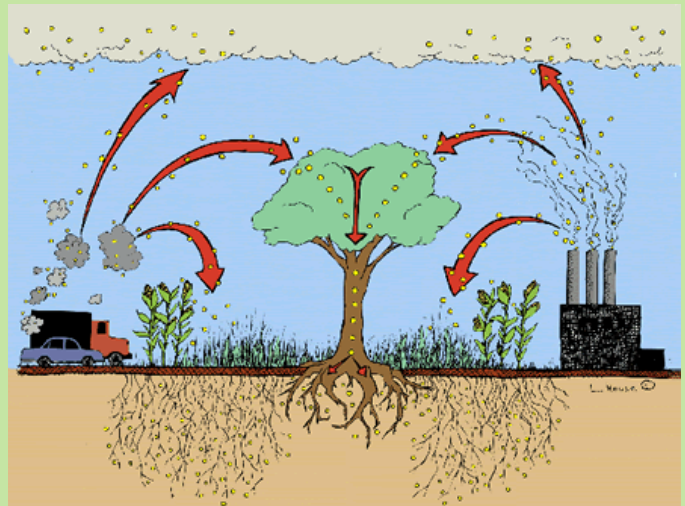


Diagram by ERS/USDA

Sustainability Challenges

State Mandates for Greenhouse Gas Reduction

The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32) requires the State to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. In order to meet this mandate, the State has identified local governments as important partners in GHG reduction through land use and development controls. Since 2007 the California Attorney General's Office has been requiring local governments to address global warming in their general plans, environmental review documents, and development approvals. More recently (2008) the State passed SB 375, which ties transportation plans prepared by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (i.e., Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments) to GHG reduction targets and sustainable development plans. GHG emissions are expected to continue to increase within the county as population and employment grows; however, the General Plan can be crafted to mitigate for this increase. Without appropriate actions within the General Plan to reduce GHG emissions, the County may not be able to meet AB 32 mandates.

Adapting to Climate Change

Climate change impacts are expected to include shifts in the availability of resources and increased risks from natural disasters. In 2008 the Governor signed an executive order calling for preparation of statewide adaptation strategies to address expected climate change impacts. It is likely that the county will experience environmental impacts from climate change, and should be prepared to mitigate those impacts. Climate change predictions could potentially affect the frequency and intensity of impacts such as: crop shifts, droughts, sea level rise, flooding, heat waves, water supply, water quality, and wildfire. According to the California Climate Action Team, over the next century the county and its residents and businesses may have to adapt to changing conditions by modifying farming practices and crop types, improving flood protection, identifying new water sources, conserving water and energy, expanding emergency services, and modifying development patterns.

Health Benefits of Meeting Emission Standards

Air pollution between 2005 and 2007 in California caused more than \$193 million per year in hospital-based medical care costs as people sought help for problems such as asthma and pneumonia that are triggered by elevated pollution levels. During this three-year period, excessive levels of ozone and particulate pollution caused nearly 30,000 emergency room visits and hospital admissions. The most costly conditions were hospital admissions triggered by air pollution for acute bronchitis, pneumonia, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Nearly three quarters of the health events were triggered by high levels of fine particulate pollution. The County has the opportunity through the General Plan Update to develop strategies and policies to reduce pollution through land use planning, automotive trip reductions, and carbon sequestration.

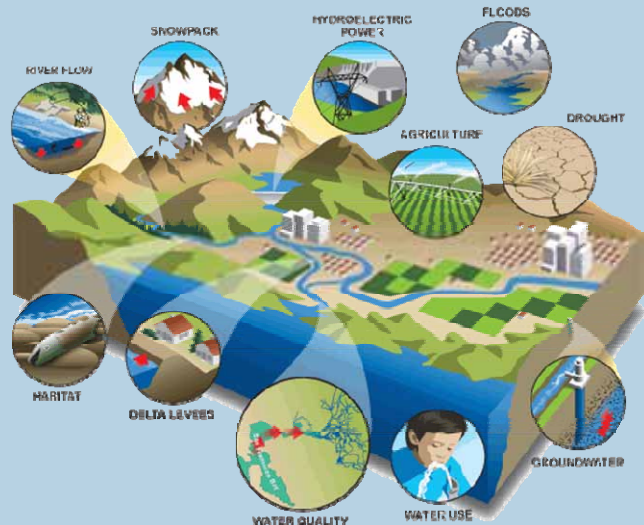


Diagram by the California Department of Water Resources, Climate Change in California Fact Sheet