

Western Hills Watershed Protection Area

Baseline Documentation Report



Prepared By:

Anna Bride
Mendocino Land Trust
215 S Main Street
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Neil Davis
City of Ukiah
411 W Clay St
Ukiah, CA 95482

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Baseline Summary

Property: Western Hills Watershed Protection Area

Acreage: 763 acres

Leases: Ukiah Wireless - WiFiber

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 001-040-83, 003-110-90, 003-190-09, 003-190-11, 003-190-13, 003-190-14, 003-260-01, 003-500-14, 156-250-02, 157-030-02, 157-030-03, 157-050-01, 157-050-02, 157-050-03, 157-050-04, 157-050-09, 157-050-11, 157-050-12, 157-060-02, 157-060-03, 157-070-05

Landowner: The City of Ukiah

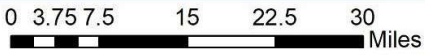
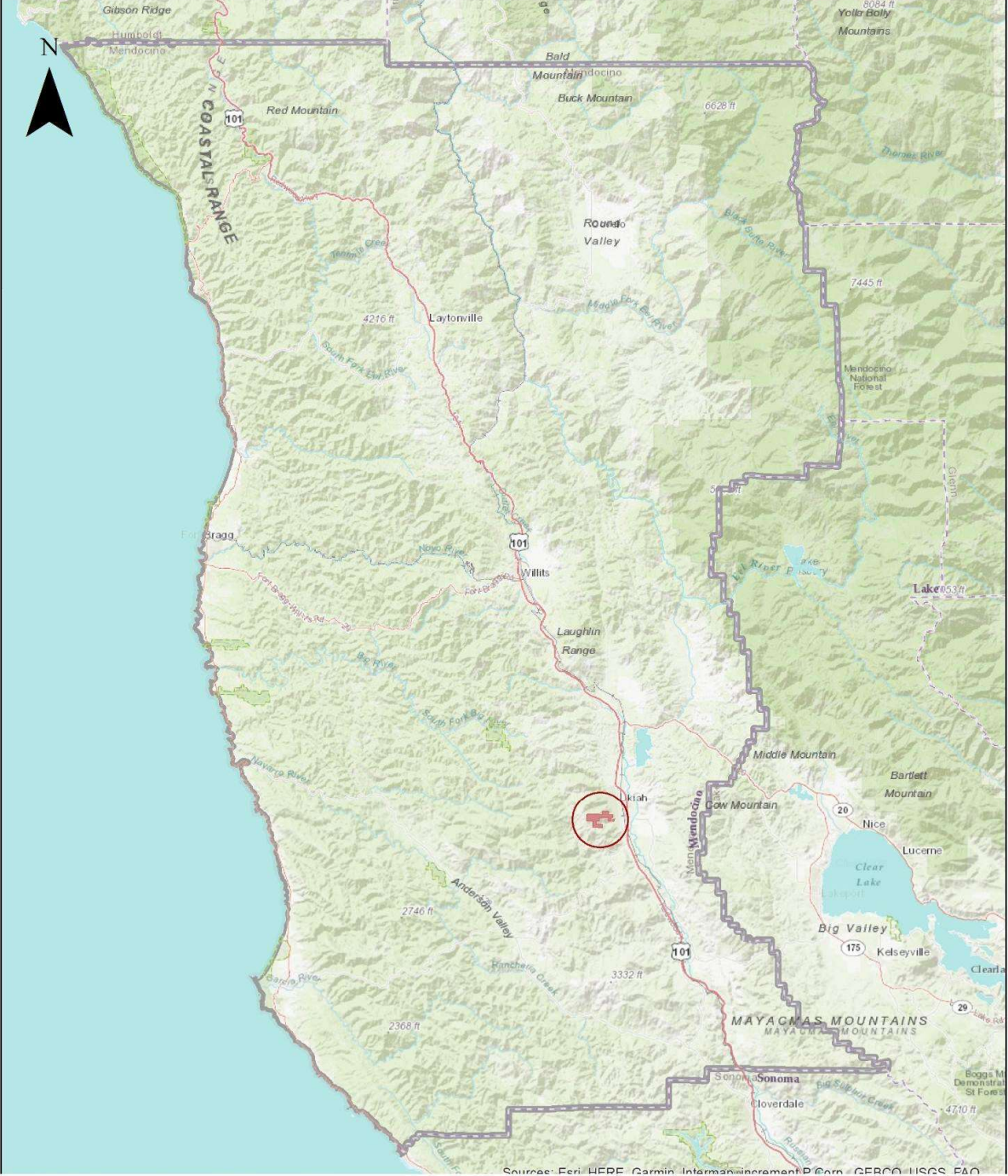
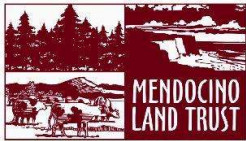
Fieldwork Days; **Mendocino Land Trust** - January 20th, 2023
 City of Ukiah - September 21st, 28th 2022; October 12th, 2022; January 20th 2023; May 17th, May 31st 2023.

Contact Information:

City of Ukiah
Neil Davis, Director of Community Services
300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482
707-467-5764

Mendocino Land Trust
info@mendocinolandtrust.org
215 S Main Street, Fort Bragg, CA 95437
707-962-0470

Western Hills Mendocino County



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO

Summary of Significance:

The purpose of this baseline report is to highlight the natural and historic resources represented within the Western Hills Watershed Protection Area (WHWPA) property in the City of Ukiah (City), Mendocino County, California while also providing a starting point to preparing a property management plan

The Western Hills (WHWPA) holds many scenic and ecological conservation values, including watershed protection, regional wildlife connectivity, wildfire protection, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and open space. A CEQA Initial Study was performed as part to the acquisition that stated, “given the steep terrain, the potential for substantial prehistoric or historic settlement is considered low.” The vegetation conservation values in the WHWPA include the following plant alliances: California Black Oak, Coast and Canyon Live Oak, Chamise Chaparral, Oregon White Oak as well as a wide variety of wildlife species. The WHWPA may also allow for potential public and municipal uses such as development of recreational trails, and possible sites for critical public infrastructure, including the possibility of water storage and power generation should these uses be pursued and approved in the future. The main goal is to obtain the myriad benefits of open space preservation for the City of Ukiah.

This document, including photographs, exhibits and attachments is an accurate representation of this WHWPA as of January through May 2023.

Introduction

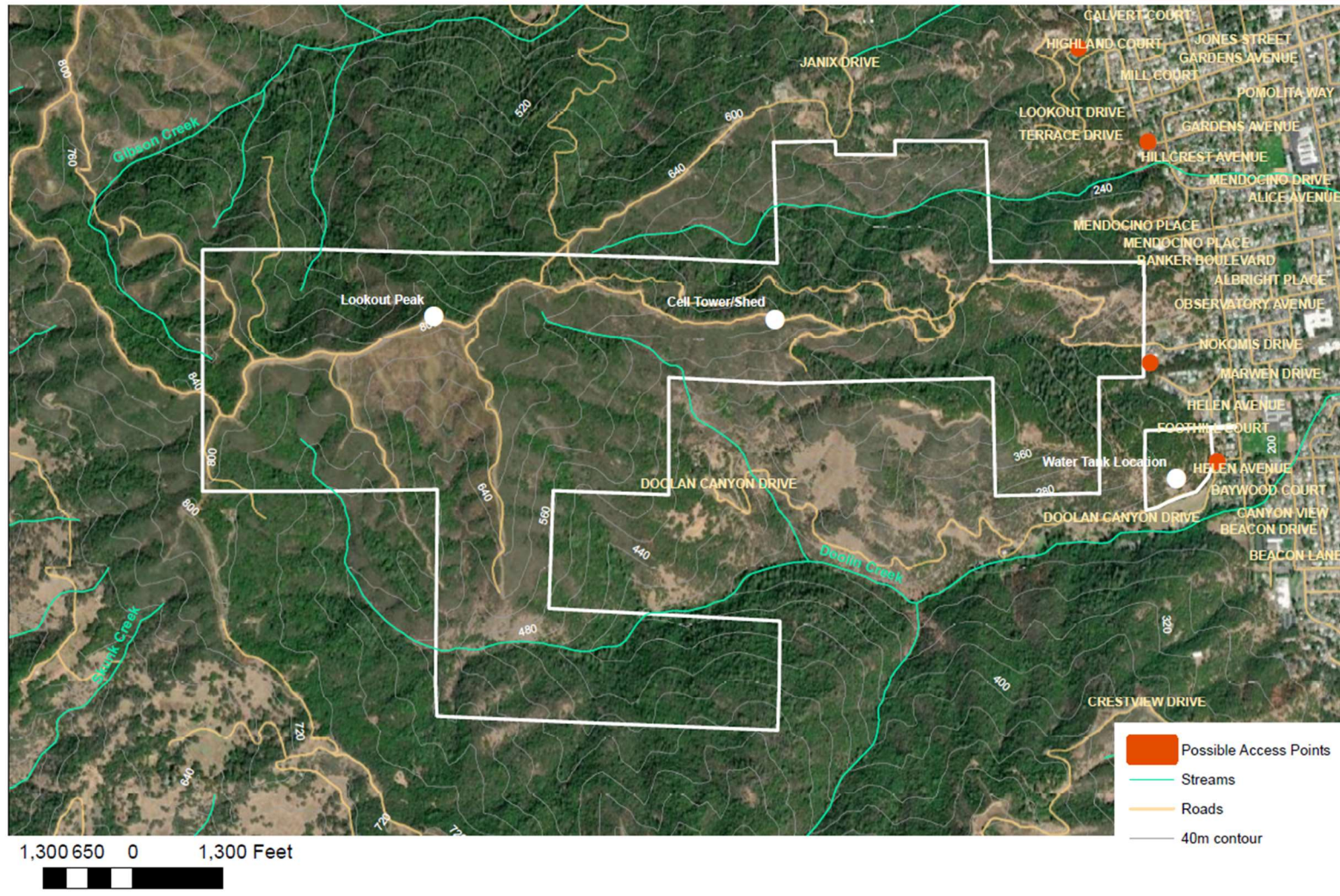
This report documents the physical, biological and hydrological features, general condition, land use and improvements of the WHWPA.

The WHWPA is 763+ or - acres and lies in the hills west of Ukiah Valley. This land serves as a valuable habitat refuge for wildlife, as well as potential wildfire mitigation opportunities. For decades, conserving the hills to the west of Ukiah has been discussed by the community. Discussions typically focused on the biological and aesthetic values the WHWPA would add, as forested and undeveloped land. The Ukiah City Council’s Strategic Plan describes a goal of promoting the protection of Ukiah’s western wildland urban interface to restore and conserve forests and stream ecosystems, provide large-scale wildfire mitigation, and protect the Upper Russian River Watershed to benefit fish and wildlife as well as the greater Ukiah community. Further, the western hills are seen to hold potential for water storage and power generation. Funding for the project was secured from the City of Ukiah’s Electric Utility Department, the Water Resources Department, and the General Fund.

This document will serve as a baseline for future conservation, recreation, land and fire management within the WHWPA. Information for this report was collected by MLT staff during a site visit to the WHWPA on January 20th, 2023. MLT staff provided valuable research from multiple sources to collect, collate, and present existing information on site conditions. Photographs documenting the condition of the WHWPA were taken during the MLT site visit. All maps were prepared by MLT Conservation Coordinator, Anna Bride, using data from Mendocino County, California Fish and Wildlife, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Water Board, California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE), and ESRI. City of Ukiah Staff, led by Director of Community Services Neil Davis, as well as a variety of volunteer subject matter experts provided additional insights and information.

Exhibit 1:

Western Hills Basemap



Physical Setting:

The WHWPA is located in eastern Mendocino County in the foothills rising from the Ukiah Valley in the Northern Coast Mountain Range. From north to south, the WHWPA ranges between a tenth of a mile to 1.3 miles wide and spans 1.8 miles from east to west for a total of ~ 763 acres. The WHWPA extends from the valley floor at 760 feet to its highest point at Lookout Peak at 2,726 feet in elevation. Overall, the WHWPA is steep with slopes ranging from 30-70 percent. The vegetation is overgrown in some locations and wildfire has been suppressed for decades. Looking to the west from the highest ridge, views of Pine Mountain and the headwaters of Robinson Creek can be seen. Looking to the east provides views of Lake Mendocino, the Ukiah Valley, and the mountain tops of Sanhedrin, Hull, Snow, Red, and Konocti Mountains. Two forks of Doolin Creek flow east through the central and southern parts of the WHWPA. The headwaters of Gibson Creek lie in the northwesternmost corner of the WHWPA and an unnamed creek in the northeastern parcel of the WHWPA flows east toward Hillcrest Avenue.

Accessibility:

Currently the WHWPA is closed to the public, however non-motorized recreational use is a future possibility. Recreational use would likely be limited to hiking, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing. Acquisition negotiations resulted in the opportunity of private development on the lowest portions of Redwood Avenue. With or without development, property owners in this area would have no special or additional access to the WHWPA beyond what is granted to the general public.

The primary access for City staff to the project is from Redwood Ave. Secondary access is from the top of San Jacinta Avenue, Helen Avenue, and Doolin Canyon Road. Potential future public access to the WHWPA could be via Hillview Avenue, San Jacinta Avenue, Helen Avenue, and/or Doolin Canyon Drive. See Exhibit 1, Western Hills Basemap.

In addition to the possibility of legal access, there are at least eight locations that might provide opportunities for trespass. Due to a lack of roads or trails in conjunction with heavily vegetated and steep slopes, there is little possibility of incursion from the south. However, adjoining property owners to the north and west, and their guests, may have opportunity for ready illegal access. Additionally, neighbors to the south with property on Redwood Ave might have opportunity. The steepness of the roads will make trespass unappealing to all but the hardest hikers or mountain bikers. Dirt bike riding or four wheeling, however, would be both more destructive and more tempting. The eight locations identified here may require monitoring and / or additional gating.

Vegetation Alliances:

A thorough and professional alliance mapping was unavailable for this baseline assessment. CAL VEG online mapping sources were downloaded and reviewed; however, field observations do not support their findings. Field observations conducted by City of Ukiah staff and volunteer biologists, as well as the findings of Gordon Leppig's 2019 (see references) site visit suggest the Doug Fir sited by CAL VEG is uncommon, while Interior Live Oak is co-dominant with Madrone, Knobcone Pine, and to a lesser extent Tan Oak. On north facing slopes and shadier areas, groves of Redwood and isolated Canyon Oak are also found. The lowest elevations near Helen Ave and Doolin Canyon Road likely represent a Black Oak alliance.

City of Ukiah staff in consultation with local volunteer biologists divided the WHWPA into three broad vegetation-type areas; Shrubland, Mixed Hardwoods, and Oak Woodland (Black Oak Alliance). South facing slopes are dominated by shrubs, north facing slopes tend to be mixed hardwoods, while a small area of oak woodland is found on the lowest slopes abutting Helen Ave and Doolin Canyon Drive. South facing slopes suggest an *Adenostoma fasciculatum* alliance dominated by Chamise with Toyon and *Ceanothus cuneatus*. At higher elevations Chaparral Pea and Yerba Santa are added to the mix. North facing slopes and draws are inhabited with mixed woodlands of Oak, Tanoak, Madrone, Knobcone Pine, Redwood, and California Bay Laurel. The areas of mixed hardwoods may represent a tapestry of varied Oak alliances including likely possibilities of "California black oak forest," "mixed oak forest," "oregon white oak woodland," and others, (A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd Edition) but these suggestions should not be taken as definitive alliance identifications.

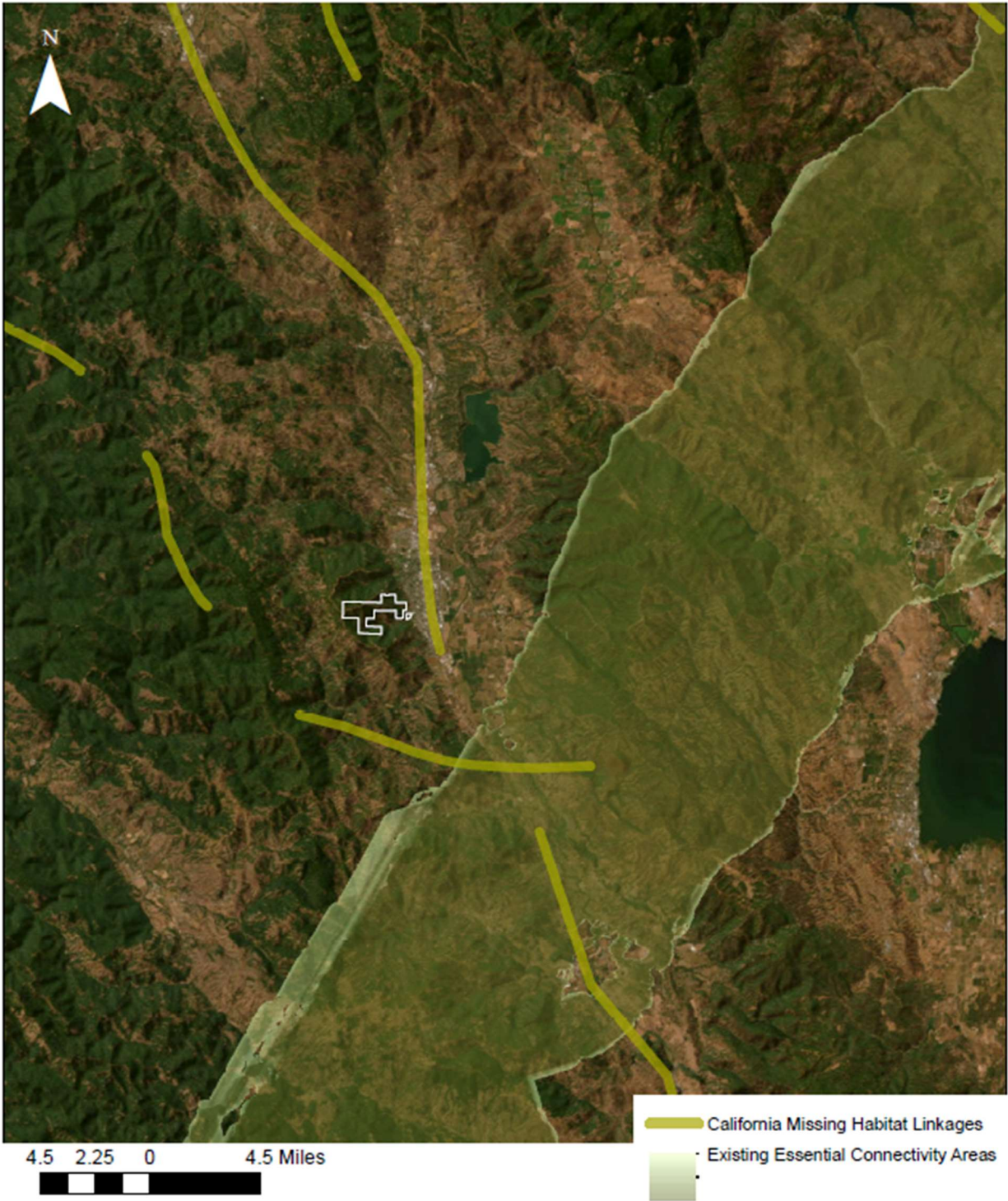
A tentatively identified specimen of *Arctostaphylos stanfordiana* ssp. *rachei* (Stanford's Manzanita) was found on the site. Stanford's Manzanita is a California rare plant with a rank of 1B.1 (rare, threatened, or endangered in CA and elsewhere). Additionally, *Lilium rubescens* is a perennial herb (bulb) that is native to California, and endemic (limited) to California. It has a California rare plant rank of 4.2 (limited distribution) and based on its widespread presence in a similar environment at on the western hills to the north, it is expected to be found growing in shadier areas of the WHWPA. Also of note, California Nutmeg and Chinquapin are present. Although locally unusual and interesting to the botanical community, they are not a species of special concern.

Habitat Connectivity:

The California Wilderness Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Geological Survey, The Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species, and California State Parks have identified missing habitat linkages in California. “For many species to persist and to withstand environmental disturbances such as fire or climate change, isolated nature preserves will not suffice.” Habitat fragmentation reduces the permeability of the landscape to its flora and fauna. In California, urban sprawl, roads, and other forces split habitat into smaller segments. The WHWPA aligns with the Ukiah Valley missing habitat linkage. Exhibit 2 Western Hills Essential Habitat Connectivity shows the Ukiah Valley region and the existing ‘Essential Habitat Connectivity’ area comprising the Cow Mountain BLM Recreation Area and the greater Mendocino National Forest. The WHWPA lies adjacent to this essential zone and provides linkage from the remaining northern Ukiah Valley.

Exhibit 2:

Western Hills Essential Habitat Connectivity



Wildlife:

The WHWPA contains vegetation alliances that host a diverse array of species such as those listed in Exhibit 3; *Potential Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Concern*. Over 100 species of birds are expected to be present in the WHWPA based on eBird data collected at a nearby birding “hotspot” which shares a similar habitat (Exhibit 4). In consultation with members of the local Peregrine Chapter of the Audubon Society, the eBird “Cow Mountain BLM Valley View Trail” Hot Spot list was adapted to reflect the species of birds one can expect to find within the Western Hills Watershed Protection Area (see Exhibit 4 Expected Bird List). Local birding experts joined City staff on May 31st, 2023, to assess the site. A two and a half hour birding trip covering approximately 2.5 miles of road allowed for the observation of 28 species of birds. Additionally, Gordon Leppig’s 2019 site assessment noted areas that appear “to provide nesting and foraging habitat for the State and Federally threatened northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis ssp. caurina*). Birds likely to be seen on the WHWPA, not likely to be seen on the valley floor, include Mountain Quail, California Thrasher, Bell’s Sparrow, and Banded Pigeons. Isolated rock outcroppings could be occupied by Peregrine Falcons.

While the lower portions of Doolin Creek can potentially provide habitat for Federally endangered steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), the WHWPA does not have year-round blue line streams to provide suitable habitat for these species. A number of drainages crisscross the property. The drainages are not riparian and initial assessments suggest no class 3 waterways.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) records the status and locations of rare plants and animals. It makes this information available to natural resource professionals through the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB database identified a rare animal species, the red-bellied newt or *Taricha rivularis*, near and possibly within the Western Hills along one or more of the creeks.

According to CDFW, “Red-bellied newts are a California Species of Special Concern and are endemic to California. They are found in redwood and coastal forests from southern Humboldt county to Lake and Sonoma counties”. They are mainly terrestrial but will breed in streams. Adults will head to streams to reproduce when the rain starts in the fall. This newt species has impressive longevity for an amphibian, estimated between 20 and 30 years. Their diet consists of many types of invertebrates. Furthermore, CDFW states, “agriculture and urban development pose a threat because of the alteration and degradation of streams these processes require. The development of natural areas can also bring more vehicle traffic which poses a serious threat to this small species, especially during migrations to breeding areas.” Currently, the CNDDDB has 136 red-bellied newt occurrences throughout its range.

Exhibit 3: Potential Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Concern

(From CDFW 9 Quad Species List; July 22) Search 9/28/2022

Element Type	Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	State Status	CDFW Status	CA Rare Plant Rank
Animals - Amphibians	Rana aurora	northern red-legged frog	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Amphibians	Rana boylei	foothill yellow-legged frog	None	Endangered	SSC	-
Animals - Amphibians	Taricha rivularis	red-bellied newt	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Accipiter gentilis	northern goshawk	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Aquila chrysaetos	golden eagle	None	None	FP ; WL	-
Animals - Birds	Circus hudsonius	northern harrier	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Elanus leucurus	white-tailed kite	None	None	FP	-
Animals - Birds	Ardea alba	great egret	None	None	-	-
Animals - Birds	Ardea herodias	great blue heron	None	None	-	-
Animals - Birds	Agelaius tricolor	tricolored blackbird	None	Threatened	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Icteria virens	yellow-breasted chat	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Pandion haliaetus	osprey	None	None	WL	-
Animals - Birds	Setophaga petechia	yellow warbler	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Ammodramus savannarum	grasshopper sparrow	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Birds	Melanerpes lewis	Lewis' woodpecker	None	None	-	-
Animals - Birds	Strix occidentalis caurina	Northern Spotted Owl	Threatened	Threatened	-	-
Animals - Fish	Cottus asper ssp.	Clear Lake prickly sculpin	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Fish	Hesperoleucus venustus navarroensis	northern coastal roach	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Fish	Hysterocarpus traskii lagunae	Clear Lake tule perch	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Fish	Hysterocarpus traskii pomo	Russian River tule perch	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Fish	Entosphenus tridentatus	Pacific lamprey	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Fish	Oncorhynchus kisutch pop. 4	coho salmon - central California coast ESU	Endangered	Endangered	-	-
Animals - Fish	Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus pop. 16	steelhead - northern California DPS	Threatened	None	-	-
Animals - Fish	Oncorhynchus tshawytscha pop. 17	chinook salmon - California coastal ESU	Threatened	None	-	-
Animals - Insects	Bombus caliginosus	obscure bumble bee	None	None	-	-
Animals - Insects	Bombus occidentalis	western bumble bee	None	None	-	-
Animals - Mammals	Cervus canadensis nannodes	tule elk	None	None	-	-
Animals - Mammals	Arborimus pomo	Sonoma tree vole	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	Erethizon dorsatum	North American porcupine	None	None	-	-
Animals - Mammals	Eumops perotis californicus	western mastiff bat	None	None	SSC	-

Animals - Mammals	<i>Pekania pennanti</i>	Fisher	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	American badger	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	pallid bat	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Townsend's big-eared bat	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Lasiurus blossevillei</i>	western red bat	None	None	SSC	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	hoary bat	None	None	-	-
Animals - Mammals	<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	Yuma myotis	None	None	-	-
Animals - Mollusks	<i>Gonidea angulata</i>	western ridged mussel	None	None	-	-
Animals - Reptiles	<i>Emys marmorata</i>	western pond turtle	None	None	SSC	-
Community - Terrestrial	Northern Interior Cypress Forest	Northern Interior Cypress Forest	None	None	-	-
Community - Terrestrial	Serpentine Bunchgrass	Serpentine Bunchgrass	None	None	-	-
Plants - Bryophytes	<i>Entosthodon kochii</i>	Koch's cord moss	None	None	-	1B.3
Plants - Bryophytes	<i>Grimmia torenii</i>	Toren's grimmia	None	None	-	1B.3
Plants - Lichens	<i>Usnea longissima</i>	Methuselah's beard lichen	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Lichens	<i>Ramalina thrausta</i>	angel's hair lichen	None	None	-	2B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Perideridia gairdneri</i> ssp. <i>gairdneri</i>	California Gairdner's yampah	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Blennosperma bakeri</i>	Sonoma sunshine	Endangered	Endangered	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Hemizonia congesta</i> ssp. <i>calyculata</i>	Mendocino tarplant	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Hemizonia congesta</i> ssp. <i>tracyi</i>	Tracy's tarplant	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Lasthenia burkei</i>	Burke's goldfields	Endangered	Endangered	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Layia septentrionalis</i>	Colusa layia	None	None	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Lessingia hololeuca</i>	woolly-headed lessingia	None	None	-	3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Tracyina rostrata</i>	beaked tracyina	None	None	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Plagiobothrys lithocaryus</i>	Mayacamas popcornflower	None	None	-	1A
Plants - Vascular	<i>Streptanthus glandulosus</i> ssp. <i>hoffmanii</i>	Hoffman's bristly jewelflower	None	None	-	1B.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Brasenia schreberi</i>	watershield	None	None	-	2B.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Viburnum ellipticum</i>	oval-leaved viburnum	None	None	-	2B.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Silene bolanderi</i>	Bolander's catchfly	None	None	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Carex comosa</i>	bristly sedge	None	None	-	2B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Arctostaphylos stanfordiana</i> ssp. <i>raichei</i>	Raiche's manzanita	None	None	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Astragalus breweri</i>	Brewer's milk-vetch	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Trifolium buckwestiorum</i>	Santa Cruz clover	None	None	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Monardella viridis</i>	green monardella	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Fritillaria agrestis</i>	stinkbells	None	None	-	4.2

Plants - Vascular	<i>Fritillaria purdyi</i>	Purdy's fritillary	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Fritillaria roderickii</i>	Roderick's fritillary	None	Endangered	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Lilium rubescens</i>	redwood lily	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Limnanthes bakeri</i>	Baker's meadowfoam	None	Rare	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Hesperolinon adenophyllum</i>	glandular western flax	None	None	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Malacothamnus mendocinensis</i>	Mendocino bush-mallow	None	None	-	1A
Plants - Vascular	<i>Cypripedium californicum</i>	California lady's-slipper	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Cypripedium montanum</i>	mountain lady's-slipper	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Piperia candida</i>	white-flowered rein orchid	None	None	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Kopsiopsis hookeri</i>	small groundcone	None	None	-	2B.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Erythranthe nudata</i>	bare monkeyflower	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Gratiola heterosepala</i>	Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop	None	Endangered	-	1B.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Pleuropogon hooverianus</i>	North Coast semaphore grass	None	Threatened	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Leptosiphon acicularis</i>	bristly leptosiphon	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Leptosiphon latisectus</i>	broad-lobed leptosiphon	None	None	-	4.3
Plants - Vascular	<i>Navarretia leucocephala</i> ssp. <i>bakeri</i>	Baker's navarretia	None	None	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Ranunculus lobbii</i>	Lobb's aquatic buttercup	None	None	-	4.2
Plants - Vascular	<i>Ceanothus confusus</i>	Rincon Ridge ceanothus	None	None	-	1B.1
Plants - Vascular	<i>Horkelia bolanderi</i>	Bolander's horkelia	None	None	-	1B.2

FP= Fully Protected
SSC = Species of Special Concern
WL = Watch List

Exhibit 4: Expected Bird List

Western Hills Watershed Protection Area Expected Bird List

1. Acorn Woodpecker	41. Golden-crowned Sparrow	81. Say's Phoebe
2. American Crow	42. Great Horned Owl	82. Sharp-shinned Hawk
3. American Goldfinch	43. Hairy Woodpecker	83. Song Sparrow
4. American Kestrel	44. Hermit Thrush	84. Spotted Towhee
5. American Robin	45. Hooded Merganser	85. Steller's Jay
6. Anna's Hummingbird	46. House Finch	86. <u>Swainson's</u> Thrush
7. Ash-throated Flycatcher	47. House Wren	87. Townsend's Warbler
8. Bald Eagle	48. Hutton's Vireo	88. Tree Swallow
9. Band-tailed Pigeon	49. Lawrence's Goldfinch	89. Turkey Vulture
10. Barn Swallow	50. Lazuli Bunting	90. Varied Thrush
11. Bell's Sparrow	51. Lesser Goldfinch	91. Vaux's Swift
12. <u>Bewick's</u> Wren	52. Lewis's Woodpecker	92. Violet-green Swallow
13. Black Phoebe	53. Lincoln's Sparrow	93. Warbling Vireo
14. Black Swift	54. MacGillivray's Warbler	94. Western Bluebird
15. Black-headed Grosbeak	55. Merlin	95. Western Kingbird
16. Black-throated Gray Warbler	56. Mountain Quail	96. Western Meadowlark
17. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	57. Mourning Dove	97. Western Tanager
18. Brewer's Blackbird	58. Nashville Warbler	98. Western Wood-Pewee
19. Brown Creeper	59. Northern Flicker	99. White-breasted Nuthatch
20. Brown-headed Cowbird	60. Northern Harrier (SSC)	100. White-crowned Sparrow
21. Bullock's Oriole	61. Northern Mockingbird	101. White-tailed Kite (FP)
22. Bushtit	62. Northern Pygmy-Owl	102. White-throated Sparrow
23. California Quail	63. Nuttall's Woodpecker	103. Wild Turkey
24. California Scrub-Jay	64. Oak Titmouse	104. Willow Flycatcher
25. California Thrasher	65. Olive-sided Flycatcher	105. Wilson's Warbler
26. California Towhee	66. Orange-crowned Warbler	106. <u>Wrentit</u>
27. Cassin's Vireo	67. Pacific Wren	107. Yellow Warbler (SSC)
28. Cedar Waxwing	68. Pacific-slope Flycatcher	108. Yellow-breasted Chat (SSC)
29. Chestnut-backed Chickadee	69. Peregrine Falcon	109. <u>Yellow-rumped</u> Warbler
30. Chipping Sparrow	70. Pileated Woodpecker	
31. Cliff Swallow	71. Pine Siskin	SSC = Species of Special Concern
32. Common Raven	72. Purple Finch	FP = Federally Protected
33. Cooper's Hawk	73. Red-breasted Nuthatch	WL = Watch List
34. Dark-eyed Junco	74. Red-breasted Sapsucker	
35. Downy Woodpecker	75. <u>Red-naped</u> Sapsucker	
36. Eurasian Collared-Dove	76. Red-shouldered Hawk	
37. European Starling	77. Red-tailed Hawk	
38. Fox Sparrow	78. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
39. Golden Eagle (FP;WL)	79. Rufous Hummingbird	
40. Golden-crowned Kinglet	80. Rufous-crowned Sparrow	

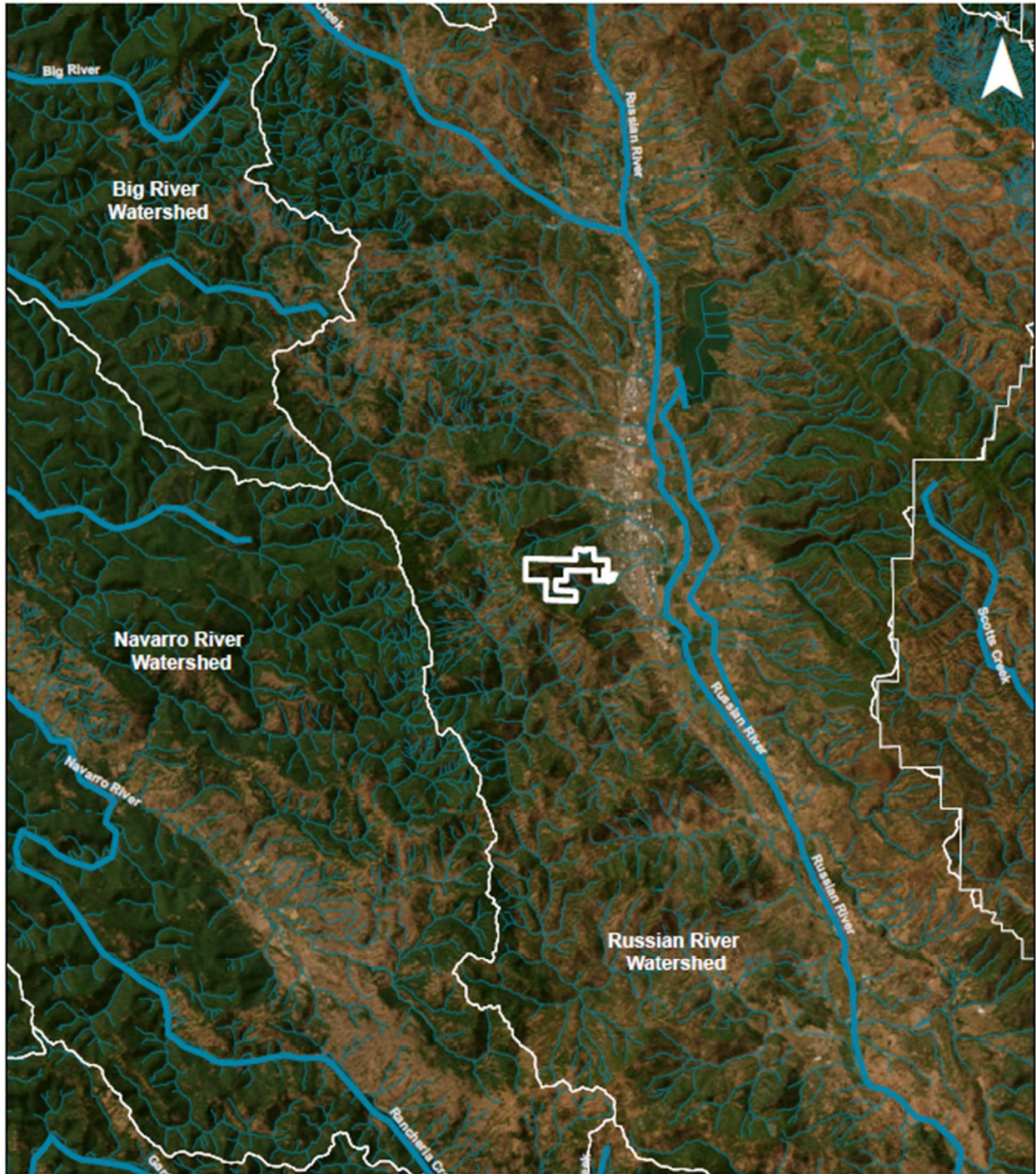
*The Expected Bird List is based on the eBird "Cow Mountain BLM Valley View Trail" Hot Spot list accessed on September 23, 2022. Special Thanks to Roger Foote, George Gibbs, and Chuck Vaughn for assistance in modifying the list to reflect the habitats of the Western Hills Watershed Protection Area

Watersheds:

All 763 acres of the Western Hills WHWPA falls within the hydrologic regional Russian River watershed area see Exhibit 6 Watersheds and Rivers. The Russian River watershed encompasses 1,485 square miles of land and 110 miles of river. It includes 238 streams and creeks and 63 fish species. According to the California Water Board, “the river flows southward from Redwood and Potter valleys to its confluence with Mark West Creek, where it turns west to cut through the coast range and empty into the Pacific Ocean in Jenner.” Current issues in the watershed include bacterial quality, toxic blue-green algae blooms, polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas, high water temperatures, altered sediment levels, and concerns over the amount, location, and timing of water diversions. Conservation efforts in this region aim to greatly reduce the degradation of the river as it is an important water source and valued habitat for riparian ecosystems.

Exhibit 5:

Western Hills Watersheds & Rivers



3.5 1.75 0 3.5 Miles



Soil Description:

The Soil Survey for *Mendocino County, Eastern Part and Southwestern Part of Trinity County, California* identifies six soils within the WHWPA property. Of the six soils present, the WHWPA is primarily comprised of Hopland-Whohly loams (50-70% slopes) and Maymen-Etsel-Snook complex (30-75% slopes) see Exhibit 6 Soil Survey. Notably, no serpentine soils have been found in the WHWPA.

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
116	Cummiskey gravelly loam, 30 to 75 percent slopes	54.9	7.2%
141	Hopland loam, 30 to 50 percent slopes, high ffd	73.8	9.7%
142	Hopland loam, 50 to 75 percent slopes, high ffd	28.1	3.7%
151	Hopland-Wohly loams, 50 to 75 percent slopes	312.3	40.9%
160	Maymen-Etsel-Snook complex, 30 to 75 percent slopes, high ffd	266.2	34.9%
210	Urban land	0.2	0.0%
211	Witherell-Hopland-Ashokawna complex, 50 to 75 percent slopes, high ffd	28.0	3.7%
Totals for Area of Interest		763.5	100.0%

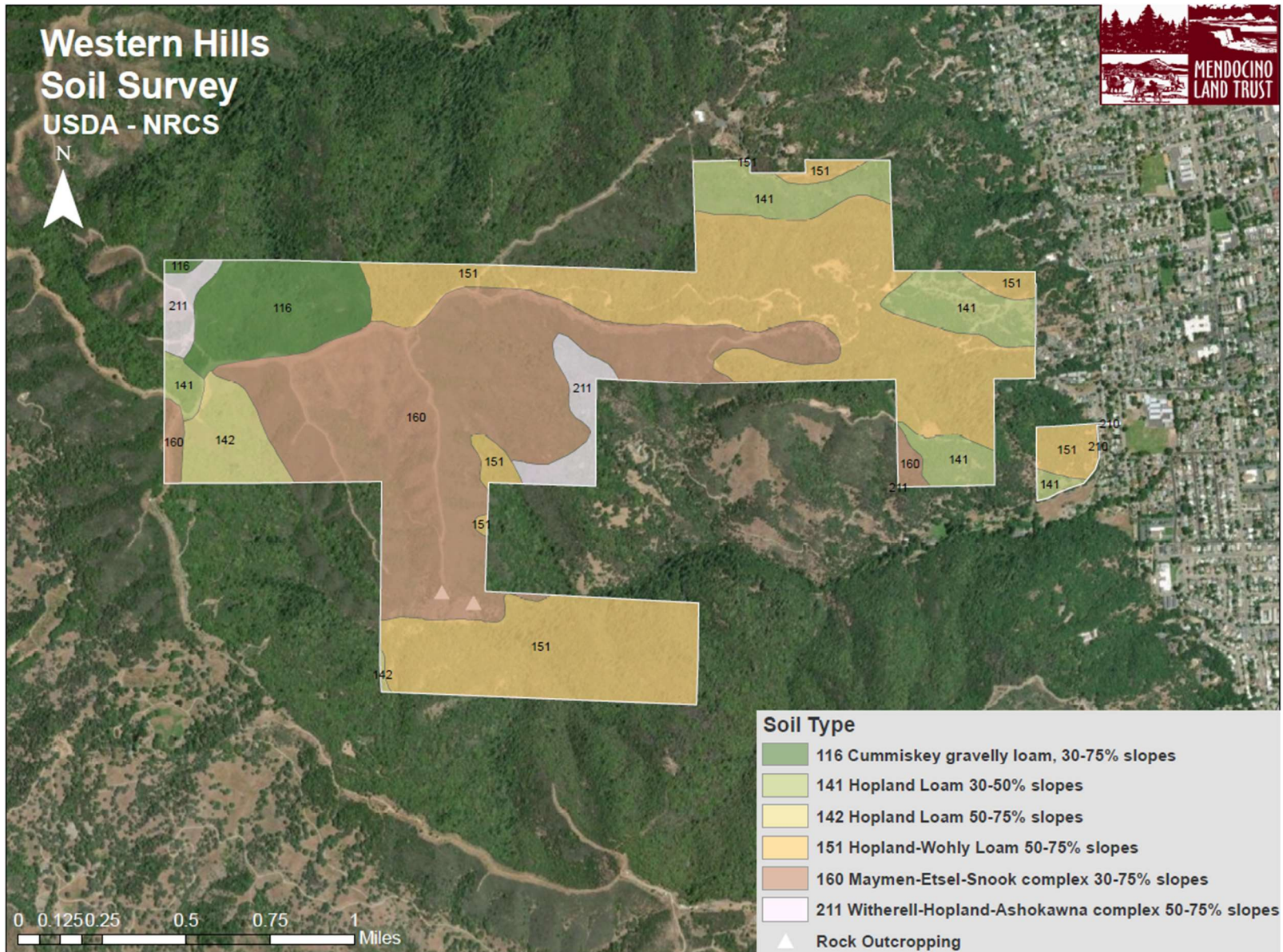


Exhibit 6

Fire Severity:

Every year the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) publishes Fire Severity Maps for all of California. This data is based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors, including areas where the department has identified winds as a major cause of wildfire spread. The western hills of Ukiah are known to be a severe fire hazard, as they have not burned in decades and hold large amounts of fuel, see Exhibit 7 Fire Severity. CalFire defines ‘Hazard’ as the physical conditions that create a likelihood of expected fire behavior over a 30 to 50-year period.

The County of Mendocino and the City of Ukiah have been actively engaging with CalFire, the Ukiah Valley Fire Authority, and other stakeholder groups to review, develop, and implement fire prevention and mitigation measures for the Ukiah Valley. The WHWPA underwent a prescribed burn on the western portion of the property in 2019. The areas treated with prescribed burn are highlighted in Exhibit 8 Fire Severity Map. On May 17, 2023 Mendocino County Resource Conservation District foresters Doug Kirk and Adam Coleman joined City staff for a site visit to better inform this report. Further fire management of the forests on this WHWPA will aid in protecting the Ukiah Valley from future catastrophic wildfires.

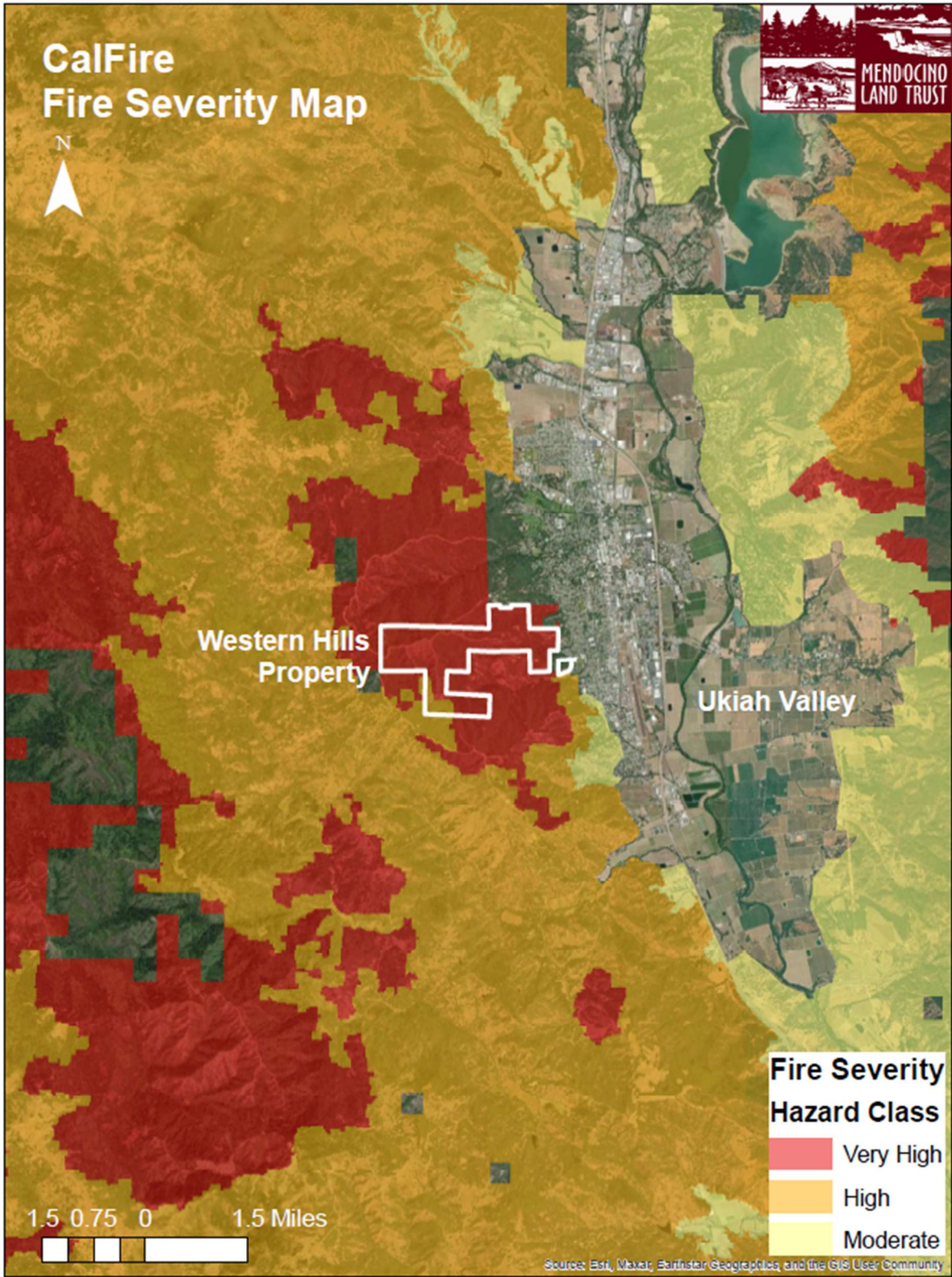
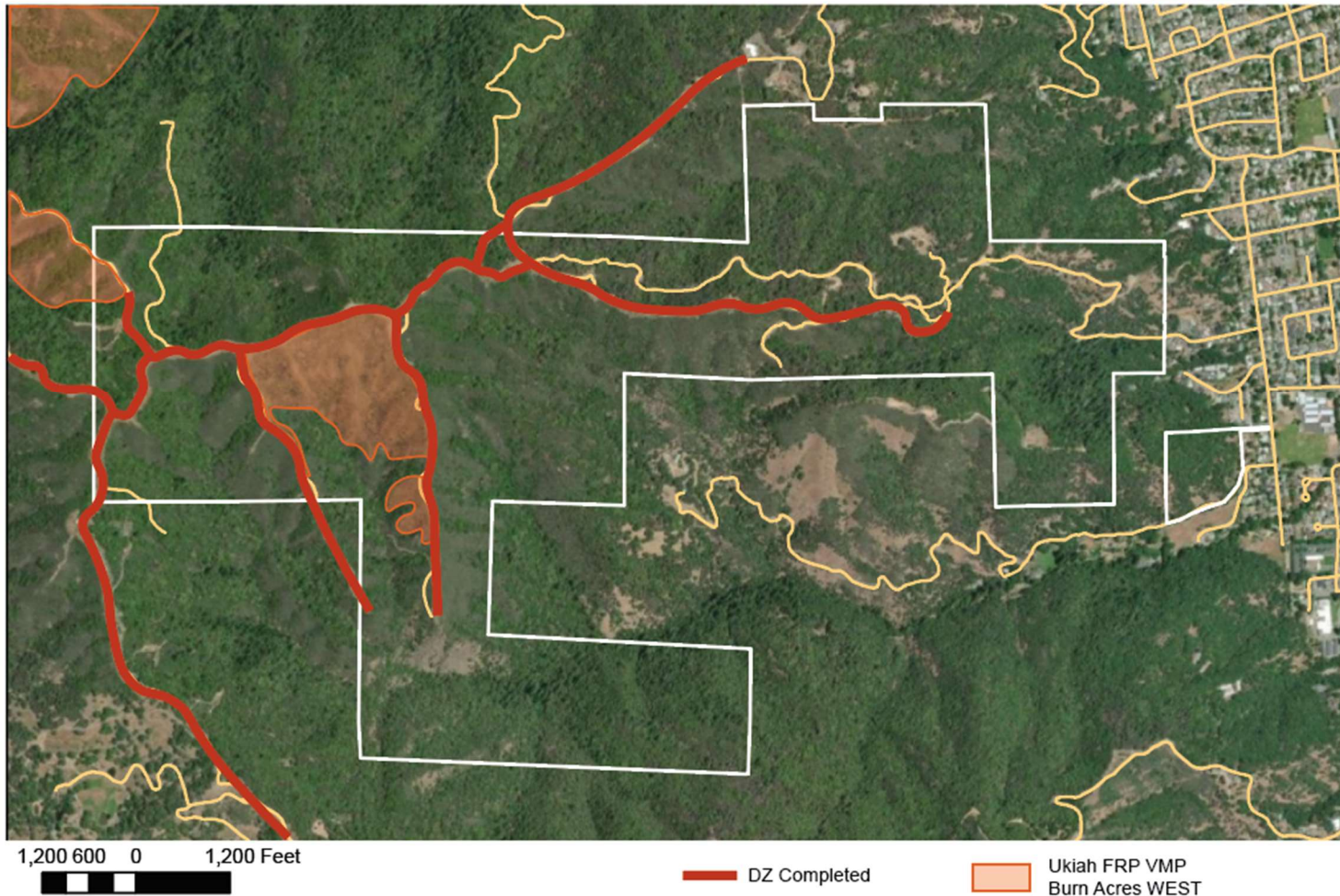


Exhibit 7:

Exhibit 8:

**Western Hills
Completed Prescribed Burns**



Current Developments:

Roads

The WHWPA has five and a half miles of dirt roads primarily located along ridge lines. These roads function as fire breaks inside the WHWPA. The roads have a traditional design utilizing in-slopes draining to ditches that then feed water to culverts. The *Handbook for Forest and Ranch and Rural Roads* (Revised First Edition, 2015) recommends a more modern approach incorporating rolling dips and graded to an out-slope reducing erosion by allowing water to sheet off the road.

In many places the in-sloped roads lack the required drainage ditches leading to culverts. Consequently, water flowing down will tend to create erosive, water collecting ruts. Water bars placed prior to this last year's storms performed admirably, but ultimately were inadequate to the task. Erosion occurred and many of the existing water bars filled with silt in this first year. Road work should be considered to upgrade these water bars or consider alternate forms of drainage such as ditch relief culverts, rolling dips, and crossroad drains. Alternatively, realignments of the steepest sections of road may provide long term cost and environmental benefit while rendering the site more accessible.

Leases

One lease exists on the WHWPA, Ukiah Wireless - WiFiber. This lease is located at the coordinates (39.136218, -123.232346) and seen on Exhibit 1 Base map. A fifteen square foot easement exists on the WHWPA to install equipment and infrastructure for providing high-speed internet to Ukiah Valley residents. All equipment installed must have prior approval by the property owner. Additionally, equipment must be installed at least twenty feet from the centerline road to maintain existing road access.

Cannabis Grows

Multiple reports of illegal cannabis grow sites were received. However, no illegal grows or detritus from prior grows has been found. Neighboring properties can be seen to have infrastructure consistent with cannabis grow sites. Site visits were confined primarily to the roadways. Most of the drainages on the WHWPA are likely too high and dry to be a good source of year-round water and therefore are not expected to be home to abandoned tanks or irrigation. Further assessment of the drainages should be performed and monitored to assure no new incursions occur.

Potential Developments:

The City plans to place water tanks with associated infrastructure for fire protection, likely at (39.13161, -123.21612) see Exhibit 1 Base map.

Recommendations:

Fire Mitigation

Addressing the reality of fire risk is an immediate need. Staff have begun to consult with the Ukiah Unified Fire District, Calfire, and the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council to quickly develop and implement a fire mitigation plan. Currently, several funding opportunities are available to help property owners reduce wildfire risk. CalFire offers a Wildlife Protection Grants Program that releases funding every year. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is available through the Mendocino County Resource Conservation District. It is a reimbursement program for landowners wanting to conduct fire mitigation and fuel reduction projects. Additionally, the California Fire Safe Council Administers U.S Forest Service State Fire Assistance (SFA) grant programs and offers a variety of other federal, state, and private funding opportunities.

Road Building and Maintenance

A road maintenance plan will need to be developed. These efforts will also need to be coordinated with fire professionals. Site access is a major concern for fire fighters, nevertheless, a cost benefit of road system utility should be considered to include the possibility of de-commissioning some of the roads.

Once initial maintenance cost estimates are established, the costs and potential long-term savings of realigning the roads can be explored. Realigning roads to more appropriate grades will decrease long term maintenance costs while improving site accessibility. The City's Streets and Parks teams will need to collaborate to address immediate maintenance needs prior to the next rainy season.

Trespass and Illegal Activity Monitoring

Trespass and illegal activity are not currently a significant problem. However, an ongoing monitoring system should be established. Gates at each of the entry points should have City locks added to them and a neighbor contact list built and maintained to coordinate access issues and allow for emergency egress for neighbors.

Travel time from City Hall to the western end of the project and back is approximately two hours. Ideally, monitoring should happen once a week. To save City staff time in performing these rounds, a Volunteer Steward Program might be developed. Wildlife cams should be placed at strategic locations and checked routinely to monitor for trespass.

Invasive Plant Control

A thorough assessment of existing invasive plants is beyond the resources available for this baseline document. City staff were able to identify a few invasive plants. Botanists who visited

the site did not express undue concern about the invasives, however it was not the focus of their visits. French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) is the most concerning invasive. Although currently limited to the lowest elevations of the property, it is highly invasive and is highly flammable. At a minimum, efforts should be made to confine its spread if not eliminate it from the property. Containment will require an ongoing effort. Star Thistle (*Centaurea diluta*) is also found along most of the sunnier sections of roads and a plan for containment should be explored.

Recreation and Public Access

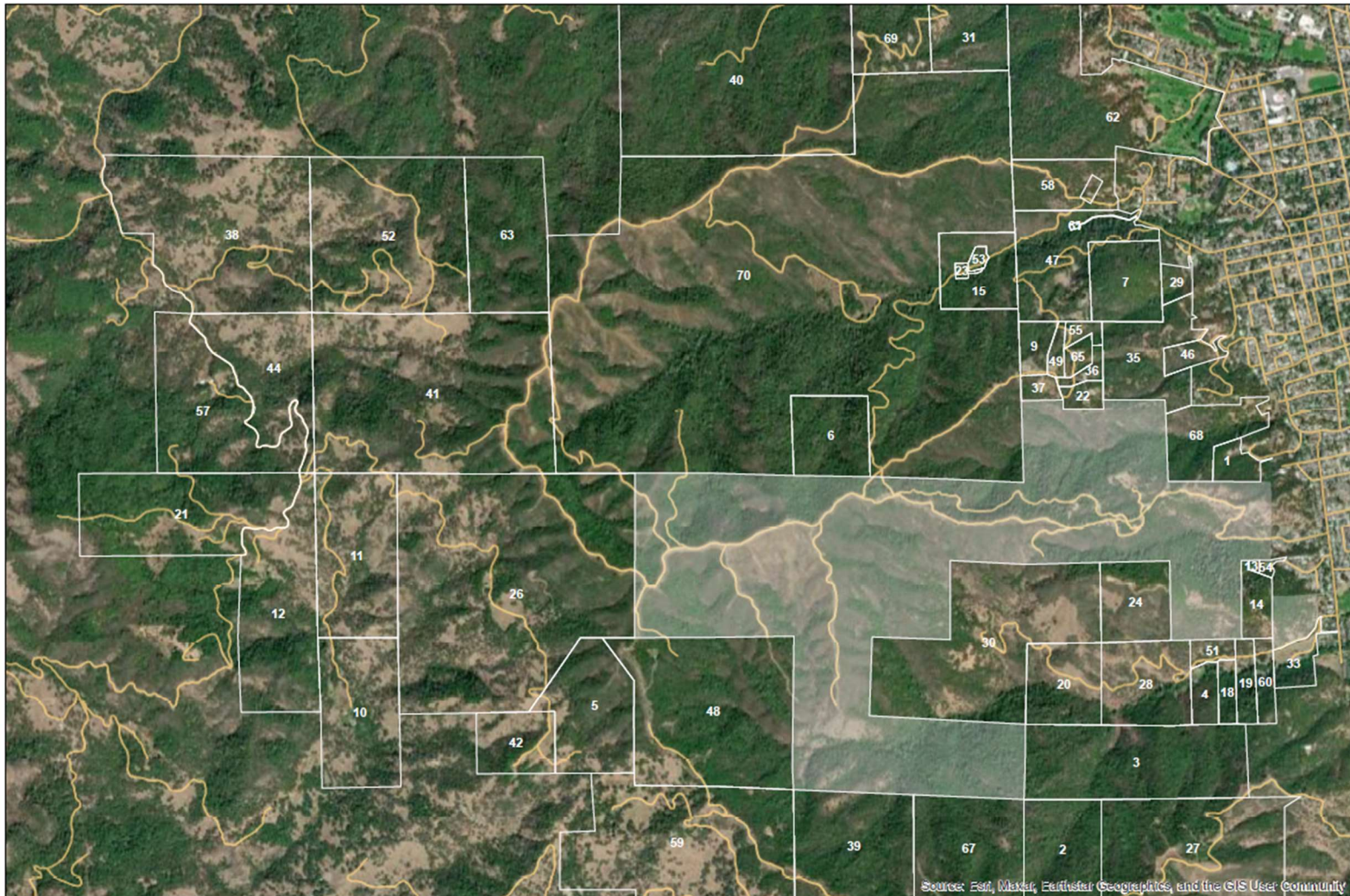
The general public of the Ukiah Valley have limited access to open spaces. The WHWPA has the potential for public access. The proximity of the WHWPA to a population center makes it a logical place for public access. Although there are a few species of special concern, overall, the site is not a “sensitive” habitat. Currently, the existing roads are prohibitively steep for all but the hardest hikers. Docent led outings with 4-wheel drive vehicles could be made available in the short term. At the time of this writing, access points are limited to City staff at San Jacinta Avenue and Redwood Avenue.

Opening the area to the general public would involve identifying more suitable access points and building trail heads and trails. Hiking, mountain biking, and nature viewing are the most likely candidates for this kind of recreational access. Although horseback riding and off-roading are theoretically possible, both activities require significantly more resources including large parking lots that are completely separate from public streets. The cost of building and maintaining trails and bridges for motorized or equestrian use is significantly higher. Providing appropriate parking is likely too high a barrier to inclusion of equestrian and 4-wheeler use by itself.

Additionally, local Native American culture bearers have expressed interest in having access to City owned lands to pursue and pass on traditional cultural practices. A pilot program could be developed to allow this activity as part of the Volunteer Steward Program mentioned in the Trespass and Illegal Activity Monitoring section.

Exhibit 9

Western Hills Neighboring Parcels



Neighboring Parcels

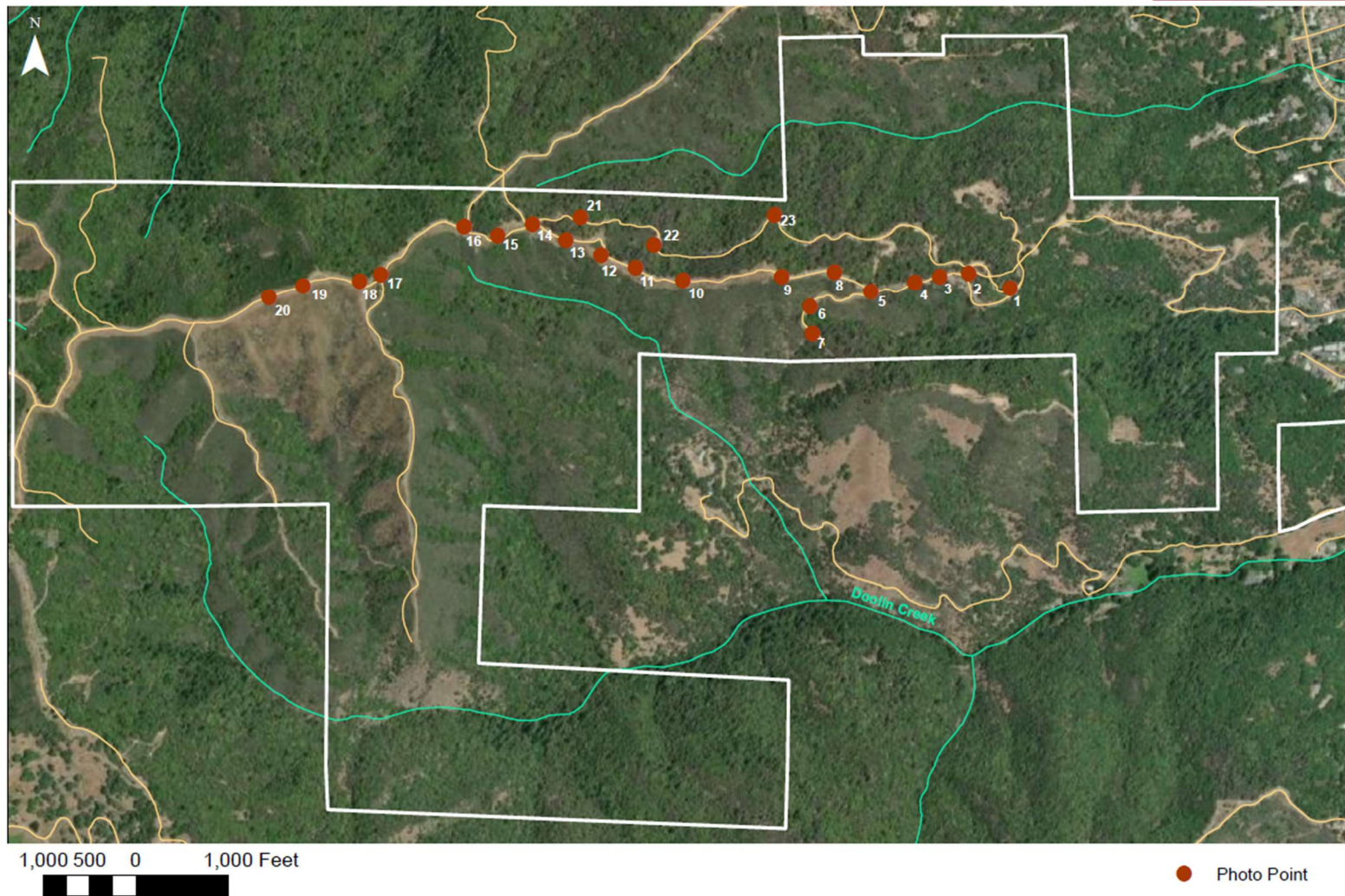
OBJECTID OWNER
 1 BELTRAMI ROBERT R
 2 BROOKE CLAUDE L &
 JANICE E
 3 BROOKE CLAUDE L 1/7
 4 BUCHANAN JOHN W
 SR & JOANN
 5 CARON GAETAN
 6 CASTRO FRANCISCO &
 REBECCA
 7 CAVALIN GREGORY G
 & LISA
 8 CEJA CELSO
 9 CEJA ISMAEL
 10 CHANEY GERALD R &
 WINONA A
 11 CHANEY GERALD
 RALPH & WINO
 12 CHANEY JARED R &
 BETHANY M
 13 CHINN JEANNE TTEE
 14 CITY OF UKIAH
 15 CITY OF UKIAH THE
 16 COUNTY OF
 MENDOCINO
 17 CROWN CASTLE GT
 COMPANY LL
 18 DAVIS ROMILDA
 HUMMEL
 19 DILL DENNIS C &
 CHRISTINE
 20 DIVIJATI
 21 DORY ROBERT H &
 LORETTA TT
 22 EDWARDS WILLIAM
 23 EIFFERT REX TTEE 1/2
 24 ELLISON JIMMY
 25 FORD LARRY TTEE
 26 GALTIERI CESARE A
 TTEE

27 GARZINI RICK L TTEE
 28 GASKIN JOHN
 THOMPSON & JEN
 29 GEIGER MARY J TTEE
 1/2
 30 GRAVES STEPHEN G &
 MARIA
 31 HALE CHRISTOPHER M
 TTEE
 32 HEDERICH FAMILY
 TRUST THE
 33 HENRIE PATRICK &
 JOANN
 34 HERRERA PEDRO A
 SANCHEZ
 35 HUFF GRAYDEN DRAY
 1/2
 36 HULL DAVID J
 37 IBRAHIM ZIYAD A &
 KATHLEEN
 38 JAMISON WILLIAM L
 UND 1/4
 39 KAEHLER ROGER L &
 AGNES E
 40 KAMP MARTIN TTEE
 41 KASHOU MARIO
 MICHAEL TTEE
 42 KASHOU MARIO
 MICHEL 1/2
 43 KASSAR BARAK TTEE /
 44 MAZZANTI RICHARD
 ANGELO TT
 45 MINFORD CARLY
 46 MORENO ANTONIO
 CISNEROS 1/
 47 NIX JAMES R & ANNE
 M TTEES
 48 NUI RISING MOON
 TRUST
 49 PIFFERO RODERICK C
 50 PINOLEVILLE
 RANCHERIA OF P
 51 PORTNOFF JON S 1/2

52 PRAX ROGER M TTEE /
 53 REX JOHN H
 54 ROGERS JOHN D &
 DELYNNE H
 55 SANDOVAL ANTONIO
 & DANIA E
 56 SCOTT CHRISTOPHER
 DAVID 1/
 57 SOMMERS DANNY &
 MARY
 58 STRICKLAND DONALD
 V & CARO
 59 STUTSMAN JERRY S
 1/3
 60 SWETT CYMBRE L
 THOMAS & KR
 61 UKIAH CITY OF
 62 UKIAH CITY OF
 63 VACANT
 64 VAGT KIM FRANKLIN
 65 VANWINKEL STEFAN
 66 VGSR LP 43.46%
 67 WALLS CHRISTOPHER
 E & MELI
 68 WERRA ROBERT J &
 MARLENE T
 69 WHEELER VENUS A
 70 WILDBERGER BONNIE
 L TTEE 1

Exhibit 10:

Western Hills
Photo Point Map



Record of Photographs

Photograph Number	Location Number	Description	Location Coordinates
1	1	<i>Looking East towards Ukiah. These coordinates are where the Ukiah city limits begin.</i>	39.089, -123.33
2	2	<i>Road conditions after rain.</i>	39.081, -123.133
3	3	<i>Water bar conditions in the eastern portion of the WHWPA.</i>	39.081, -123.1339
4	4	<i>Erosion on roads, walking west from Location Number 3.</i>	39.136, -123.228
5	5	<i>View looking north at old fire break road. Very steep path. Views of scrub brush and pines.</i>	39.1358, -123.229
6	6	<i>View of side road southwest of main route. Approaching WHWPA boundary.</i>	39.1354, -123.231
7	7	<i>View looking south to adjacent property. End of side road.</i>	39.134, -123.231
8	8	<i>Back on main route, view looking west toward Lookout Point. Steep elevation, scrub brush on south side of path, pine grove on north side.</i>	39.136, -123.232
9	9	<i>Cell phone tower lease, Wi-Fiber.</i>	39.136, -123.2322
10	9	<i>Southern view from cellphone tower.</i>	39.136, -123.2322
11	9	<i>Southeastern view from cellphone tower. View of adjacent Doolin Creek and Ukiah Valley.</i>	39.136, -123.2322
12	10	<i>View looking west with Lookout Point at the very top.</i>	39.136, -123.235
13	11	<i>View of Hull Mountain to the northeast through pines.</i>	39.136, -123.236
14	11	<i>Severe water damage to road.</i>	39.136, -123.236

15	12	<i>Halfway up the climb to Lookout Peak. Views directly east show Snow Mountain.</i>	39.1366, - 123.237
16	13	<i>Approaching northern Property boundary. Ahead the four road cross is seen. One road goes northeast to adjacent property. One switches back east, running parallel to the main ridgeline road.</i>	39.137, - 123.238
17	14	<i>Four road cross. Left side of the image shows the main route heading uphill. Right side of the image shows road heading north to adjacent private property.</i>	39.137, - 123.239
18	14	<i>Road to private property to the north.</i>	39.137, - 123.239
19	14	<i>Road leading back east down elevation. We will traverse this route on the way back down in elevation to the city limit line.</i>	39.137, - 123.239
20	15	<i>Stand of leaning pines on northern edge of property boundary.</i>	39.137, - 123.2406
21	16	<i>View east of thick pine grove. Left road is another route to private property road to the north. Note water erosion on roads.</i>	39.137, - 123.241
22	17	<i>Small skid road leading south. Views of adjacent hills, Doolin Creek and southern Ukiah Valley.</i>	39.136, - 123.244
23	18	<i>View of prescribed burn site on western portion of WHWPA and road leading along the ridge.</i>	39.136, - 123.24476
24	18	<i>Prescribed burn site.</i>	39.136, - 123.24476
25	19	<i>View looking south where a skid road is seen on the ridge. This road is the eastern boundary of the prescribed burn. Looking south where brush becomes taller, this is the southern boundary of the prescribed burn.</i>	39.135, - 123.246
26	19	<i>Prescribed burn site on right side of image. Ukiah Valley and eastern hills in the background.</i>	39.135, - 123.246

27	20	<i>Another view of the skid road along eastern portion of burn.</i>	39.1356, - 123.247
28	20	<i>View looking west, prescribed burn on left side of road. Ahead to the left is another road that travels off to an adjacent private property.</i>	39.1356, - 123.247
29	21	<i>Facing east, heading back downhill on the side road.</i>	39.137, - 123.238
30	22	<i>Example of the density of thick immature stands of trees that exist throughout the WHWPA.</i>	39.136, - 123.236
31	23	<i>View facing northeast of Ukiah Valley, Hull and Snow Mountain.</i>	39.137, - 123.232

WHWPA Photographs



Photo 1. Location 1: Looking East towards Ukiah from the property boundary.



Photo 2. Location 2: Road conditions after rain.



Photo 3. Location 3: Water bar conditions in the eastern portion of the WHWPA.



Photo 4. Location 4: Erosion on roads, walking west from Location Number 3.



*Photo 5. Location 5: View looking north at old fire break road. Very steep path.
Views of scrub brush and pines.*



Photo 6. Location 6: View of side road southwest of main route. Approaching WHWPA boundary.



Photo 7. Location 7: View looking south to adjacent property. End of side road.



Photo 8. Location 8: Back on main route, view looking west toward Lookout Point. Steep elevation, scrub brush on south side of path, pine grove on north side.



Photo 9. Location 9: Cell phone tower lease, Wi-Fiber.



Photo 10. Location 9: Southern view from cellphone tower.



Photo 11. Location 9: Southeastern view from cellphone tower. View of adjacent Doolin Creek and Ukiah Valley.



Photo 12. Location 10: View looking west with Lookout Point at the very top.



Photo 13. Location 11: View of Hull Mountain to the northeast through pines.



Photo 14. Location 11: Severe water damage to road.



Photo 15. Location 12: Halfway up the climb to Lookout Peak. Views directly east show Snow Mountain.



Photo 16. Location 13: Approaching northern Property boundary. Ahead the four road cross is seen. One road goes northeast to adjacent property. One switches back east, running parallel to the main ridgeline road.



Photo 17. Location 14: Four road cross. Left side of the image shows the main route heading uphill. Right side of the image shows road heading north to adjacent private property.



Photo 18. Location 14: Road to private property to the north.



Photo 19. Location 14: Road leading back east down elevation. We will traverse this route on the way back down in elevation to the city limit line.



Photo 20. Location 15: Stand of leaning pines on northern edge of WHWPA boundary.



Photo 21. Location 16: View east of thick pine grove. Left road is another route to private property road to the north. Note water erosion on roads.



Photo 22. Location 17: Small skid road leading south. Views of adjacent hills, Doolin Creek and southern Ukiah Valley.



Photo 23. Location 18: View of prescribed burn site on western portion of WHWPA and road leading along the ridge.



Photo 24. Location 18: Prescribed burn site



Photo 25. Location 19: View looking south where a skid road is seen on the ridge. This road is the eastern boundary of the prescribed burn. Looking south where brush becomes taller, this is the southern boundary of the prescribed burn.



Photo 26. Location 19: Prescribed burn site on right side of image. Ukiah Valley and eastern hills in the background.



Photo 27. Location 20: Another view of the skid road along eastern portion of burn.



Photo 28. Location 20: View looking west, prescribed burn on left side of road. Ahead to the left is another road that travels off to an adjacent private property.



Photo 29. Location: 21: Facing east, heading back downhill on the side road.



Photo 30. Location 22: Example of the density of thick immature stands of trees that exist throughout the WHWPA.



Photo 31. Location 23. View facing northeast of Ukiah Valley, Hull and Snow Mountain.

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