



Biotic Approval and Riparian Exception Level 3 – Administrative Review

JUL 24 2026

Application Number: **261222**
Applicant: **County of Santa Cruz**
Sanitation Department, c/o Ivan Messina
Site Address: **Capitola Road Extension**

APN: **NO_APN_SPEC**
Owner: **County of Santa Cruz**

Proposal & Location

The project includes repairing an existing failing sewer main after maintenance crews identified structural defects due to age-related deterioration affecting the pipe, joints, and connections that require immediate repair to maintain reliable service. The existing pipe will be removed through conventional open-cut trenching which includes digging a trench, removing the existing deteriorated pipe, installing replacement pipe and backfilling the trench.

Trenchless construction methods are not possible through this alignment because of the extent of existing damage and type of existing pipe. The trenching and related construction work will take place within a 10-ft wide construction corridor. Excavated soil and construction materials will be temporarily stockpiled within existing developed or previously disturbed areas. Alternatively, excess material may be hauled off-site. After the new pipe is installed, the trench will be backfilled, and the area will be restored to its original contours and condition.

Access for construction, including placement and alignment of the temporary bypass pipe, will occur along existing access routes that are used for routine inspection and maintenance of the sewer system and manholes. Equipment staging areas have been identified in existing developed or previously disturbed areas consisting of ruderal and/or non-native grassland habitat.

Baseline Conditions and Analysis

The summary and evaluation below are based on field observations made during a site visit on July 2, 2026 by County Environmental Planning Staff and Santa Cruz County Sanitation District (SCCSD) Staff. Other sources consulted during report review included the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB), the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) information system, the USFWS Environmental Online Conservation System (ECOS), Santa Cruz County GIS Maps, aerial imagery of the project site, and personal communications between the County staff biologist and SCCSD Staff.

The sewer line that requires replacement runs north-south parallel to the eastern side of the Arana Gulch riparian corridor. The riparian corridor of Arana Gulch is mapped riparian woodland in the County's GIS. The project boundaries are mostly located outside of this mapped riparian area.

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Most of the project area is dominated by non-native residential landscaping directly above the sewer line in the northern portion of the project impact area. The understory in these areas is dominated by non-native grasses and herbaceous species including invasive English ivy.

Woodlands within and adjacent to the project impact area contain potential habitat for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Species of Special Concern (SSC) the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat. Trees in and near the project impact area also provide habitat for nesting birds. Birds of prey and migratory birds are protected under the California Fish and Game Code, and the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Under the MBTA, it is "unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture, or kill" a migratory bird unless and except as permitted by regulations.

Streams, wetlands, and their riparian corridors are also granted special protections under the County's Riparian Corridor and Wetlands Protection ordinances (Chapter 16.30). Development activities are prohibited within Riparian Corridors unless Riparian Exception Findings (SCCC 16.30.060) are met, and a Riparian Exception is approved by County Planning.

Direct impacts to riparian habitat and special-status species are not expected to result from project implementation. Conditions have been included below to ensure that potential impacts to special-status species and their habitats, and other sensitive habitats will be avoided and/or minimized to the maximum extent possible during project implementation.

Findings are on file in the County Planning Department.

Staff Recommendation

The Planning Department has taken administrative action on your application as follows:

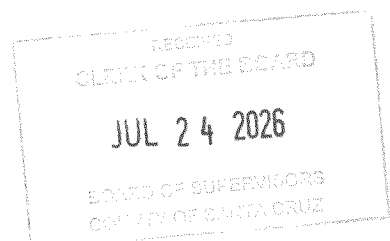
 X Approved (if not appealed).
 Denied (based on the attached findings).

NOTE: This decision is final unless appealed.

See below for information regarding appeals. You may exercise your permit after signing below and meeting any conditions which are required to be met prior to exercising the permit. If you file an appeal of this decision, permit issuance will be stayed and the permit cannot be exercised until the appeal is decided.

**Please note: This permit will expire unless exercised prior to the expiration date.
(See the Conditions of Approval below for the expiration date of this permit.)**

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Jessica deGrassi at: (831) 454-3162 or by email at jessica.degrassi@santacruzcountyca.gov.



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Report Prepared By:

DocuSigned by:

Jessica deGrassi

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Jessica deGrassi

Santa Cruz County Planning Department

701 Ocean Street, 4th Floor

Santa Cruz CA 95060

Report Reviewed By:

Signed by:

Britta Denise Hardesty

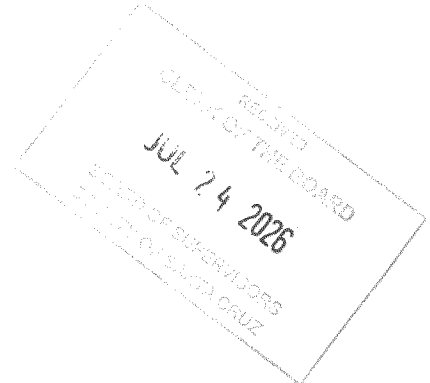
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Britta Denise Hardesty

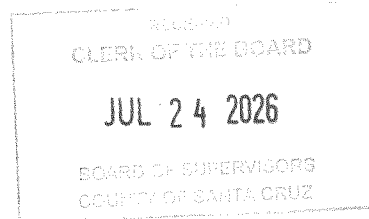
Principal Planner

Environmental Planning

Santa Cruz County Planning Department



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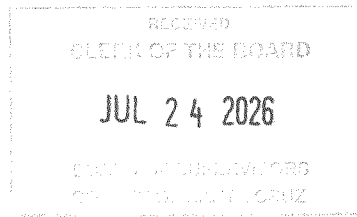
Conditions of Approval

- I. Impacts to riparian habitat shall be minimized during project construction.
- II. Construction activity including equipment access and staging shall be confined to the smallest area necessary to complete the project and located within previously disturbed/developed areas to the maximum extent possible.

Construction Conditions

- III. To avoid and minimize impacts to sensitive habitats and protected species and ensure that the project is consistent with County policies, the following Construction Conditions shall be adhered to:
 - A. Prior to any site disturbance, a pre-construction meeting shall be conducted. The meeting shall be intended to ensure that the conditions set forth in the proposed project description and permit requirements are communicated to the various parties responsible for constructing the project and shall include (at minimum) the project contractor supervisor, the Sanitation District project manager, and the project biologist.
 - B. Prior to commencement of construction, every individual working on the Project must attend biological awareness training prior to working on the job site. The training shall be delivered by a qualified biologist and shall include at minimum information regarding the following:
 1. Location and identification of sensitive habitats and all special-status species with potential to occur in the project area and the project specific measures being implemented to protect these species.
 2. The importance of avoiding impacts to sensitive habitats, special-status species and their habitat, and the steps necessary if any special-status species is encountered at any time.
 3. Identification of the limits of work, and project-specific best management practices, avoidance measures, protective measures, and the permit conditions that must be followed.
 - C. Prior to commencement of construction, high visibility fencing and/or flagging shall be installed with the assistance of a qualified biologist around all sensitive habitat areas to indicate the limits of work and prevent inadvertent grading or other disturbance within the adjacent sensitive habitat.
 1. No work-related activity including equipment staging, vehicular access, grading and/or vegetation removal shall be allowed outside the designated limits of work.
 2. Native trees to be retained near or within the project impact area shall be identified, protected with high visibility fencing at or outside of the dripline, and

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avoided during construction as sensitive habitat unless additional protection measures, provided by a qualified arborist, will be adhered to.

3. The fencing shall be inspected and maintained daily until project completion.

D. Within two weeks prior to commencement of development activities (including clearing and grubbing) a qualified biologist shall survey the project disturbance area to identify any San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat nests that may be affected by the project activities.

1. If no woodrat nests are found during the survey, no further avoidance and minimization measures for this species are necessary.
2. If woodrat nests are found and avoidance of nests is not possible, contact the County Environmental Coordinator to determine appropriate relocation measures.

E. To avoid impacts to nesting birds the following shall be adhered to:

1. Trees intended for removal shall be removed during the period of September 1st through January 31st, to avoid the nesting season.
2. If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment begins outside of the February 1 to August 31 breeding season, there will be no need to conduct a preconstruction survey for active nests.
3. If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment is to commence between February 1st and August 31st, a survey for active bird nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within two weeks prior to the start of such activity. The survey area shall include the project area, and a survey radius around the project area of 50 feet for MBTA birds and 250 feet for birds of prey.
4. If no active nest of a bird of prey or MBTA bird is found, then no further avoidance and minimization measures are necessary.
5. If active nest(s) of MBTA birds or birds of prey are found in the survey area, an avoidance buffer of 50 feet for MBTA birds and 250 feet for birds of prey shall be established around the active nest(s). The biologist shall monitor the nest and advise the applicant when all young have fledged the nest. Removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment may begin after fledging is complete.
6. If the biologist determines that a smaller avoidance buffer will provide adequate protection for nesting birds, a proposal for alternative avoidance/protective measures, potentially including a smaller avoidance buffer and construction monitoring, may be submitted to Environmental Planning for review and approval prior to removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment.

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7. If removal of vegetation, grading activity, or other use of heavy equipment stops for more than two weeks during the nesting season (February 1st - August 31st) a new survey shall be conducted prior to re-commencement of construction.
- F. A qualified biologist shall be on site to monitor vegetation removal and initial clearing and grubbing activities that occur to identify and recover any special-status species that may be found.
 - G. If a special-status animal is identified at any time prior to or during construction, work shall cease immediately in the vicinity of the individual. The animal shall either be allowed to move out of harm's way on its own or a qualified biologist with all necessary permits shall move the animal out of harm's way to a safe relocation site. The biologist shall be allowed enough time to move any special-status species from the site before work activities recommence. All sightings of special-status species shall be reported to the County Environmental Coordinator and submitted to the CNDDB.
 - H. Any seed mix used for erosion control purposes on temporarily impacted areas and exposed soils shall be limited to seeds of native species common to the surrounding or restored habitat and/or sterile seeds.
 - I. Pursuant to Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.100 of the County Code, if at any time during site preparation, excavation, or other ground disturbance associated with this development, any artifact or other evidence of an historic archaeological resource or a Native American cultural site is discovered, the responsible persons shall immediately cease and desist from all further site excavation and notify the Sheriff-Coroner if the discovery contains human remains, or the Planning Director if the discovery contains no human remains. The procedures established in Sections 16.40.040 and 16.42.100, shall be observed.

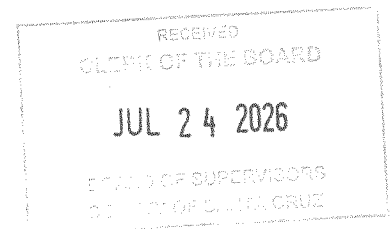
In accordance with Chapter 18.10 of the County Code, minor variations to this permit which do not affect the overall concept, intensity, or density may be approved by the Planning Director at the request of the applicant or staff.

Please note: This permit expires three years from the effective date listed below unless the conditions of approval are complied with and the use commences before the expiration date.

Approval Date: _____ 7.16.2026 _____

Effective Date: _____ 7.30.2026 _____

Expiration date: _____ 7.30.2029 _____

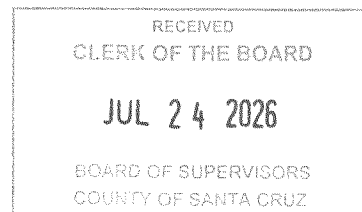


069-26 NOE

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

The Santa Cruz County Planning Department has reviewed the project described below and has determined that it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA as specified in Sections 15061 - 15332 of CEQA for the reason(s) which have been specified in this document.

Application Number: 261222
Assessor Parcel Number: NO APN SPEC
Project Location: Capitola Road, Santa Cruz CA



Project Description: The project includes repairing an existing failing sewer main after maintenance crews identified structural defects due to age-related deterioration affecting the pipe, joints, and connections that require immediate repair to maintain reliable service

Person or Agency Proposing Project: Ivan Messina, Public Works Sanitation Department

Contact Phone Number: 831-454-2814

- A. ☐ The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.
- B. ☐ The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).
- C. ☐ **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.
- D. ☐ **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).

Specify type:

E. ☒ **Categorical Exemption**

Specify type: 15301 Existing Facilities.

F. Reasons why the project is exempt:

The project includes repair and maintenance of an existing public utility line (sewer main).

In addition, none of the conditions described in Section 15300.2 apply to this project.

DocuSigned by:
Jessica deGrassi
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Jessica deGrassi, Project Planner

Date: 7/17/2026

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE CLERK
OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OFFICE FOR A
PERIOD COMMENCING 7/24/2026
AND ENDING 8/28/2026