4.3 Biological Resources

This section summarizes the biological resources in the plan area and analyzes the potential effects on biological resources related to implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. This section includes a brief summary of biological resources background information and a review of known biological resources as well as potential impacts to these resources as a result of implementation of the 2045 General Plan Update. The background information and analysis in this section is partially based on the Environmental Background Report for the City of Santa Maria, prepared in December 2020 to support their General Plan Update.

4.3.1 Setting

This following information was obtained through a desktop literature review of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC); the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB); the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Protected Resources Application; the City of Santa Maria Existing Conditions Report (2020); and Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools (LANDFIRE) and CDFW vegetation datasets.

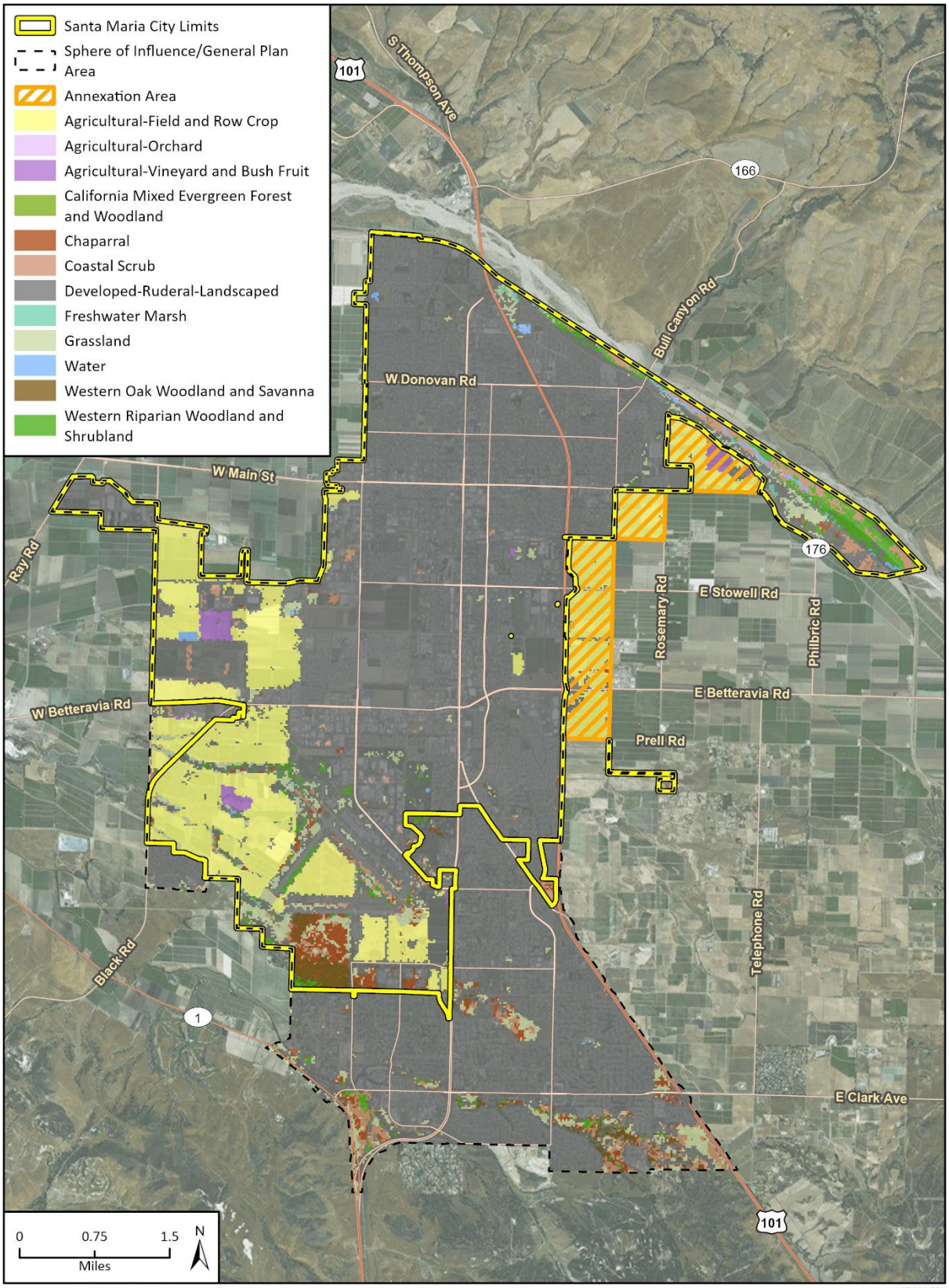
a. Land Cover and Vegetation Communities

Santa Maria has a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. Plants in this climate have adapted to grow in the early spring and winter, when water is available, and become mostly dormant in the long dry summers, when water availability is limited. The varied topography and soil types of the Santa Maria Valley have enabled a mix of native plant communities to exist in the region. Major land cover types in the Santa Maria River Valley include urbanized development, agricultural lands (which include barren land, dryland and irrigated grain crops, evergreen orchards, irrigated row and field crops, pastures, and vineyard vegetation communities), and open space (which includes annual and perennial grasslands, coast live oak woodlands, coastal scrub, eucalyptus groves, freshwater emergent wetlands, valley foothill riparian, chamise-redshank chaparral, mixed chaparral, closed-cone pine-cypress, montane riparian, and lacustrine and riverine vegetation communities). These vegetation communities were identified as occurring in the plan area by LANDFIRE's existing vegetation dataset and CDFW's California Wildlife Habitat Relationships classification scheme (CWHR) (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988, CDFW 2025a). Urbanized development contributes to the majority (71 percent) of the plan area, with the remaining areas consisting of agriculture (9 percent), open space (12 percent), and mixed agricultural-open space (8 percent) areas. Further descriptions of these vegetation communities are provided below and illustrated in Figure 4.3-1.

Land Cover

The plan area contains substantial urban and suburban development. There are, however, areas of relatively undisturbed natural habitats. Descriptions of the vegetation communities in the plan area are listed below, based on vegetation mapping using the LANDFIRE vegetation dataset and described using CDFW CWHR habitat descriptions. Figure 4.3-1 shows the vegetation communities and land covers within the plan area.

Figure 4.3-1 Vegetation Communities in the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by LANDFIRE, 2024; City of Santa Maria, 2026.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Vegetation Types

Agricultural – Field and Row Crops

Dryland Grain Crops

Vegetation in the dryland (non-irrigated) grain and seed crops habitat includes seed producing grasses – primarily barley, cereal rye, oats, and wheat, all of which are annuals. Non-irrigated grain and seed crops are often planted in the fall, and harvested in the spring, on lands with flat to gently rolling terrain. Grain crops reduce wildlife habitat richness and diversity, as they are usually established on fertile soils, which historically supported an abundance of plants and wildlife. Many species are now controlled by fencing (e.g. deer), trapping (e.g. wild pigs), and poisoning (e.g. rodents) to prevent excessive crop losses (CDFW 2025a).

Irrigated Row, Field, and Grain Crops

Irrigated row and field crops, including seed and grain crops, are generally located on flat to gently rolling terrain; flat terrain has often been leveled to facilitate irrigation and rolling terrain is usually irrigated by sprinklers. Irrigated row, field, and grain crops do not conform to normal habitat stages, and vegetation is variable in size, shape, and grow pattern based on crop type. Some crops may form 100 percent canopy while others may have bare space between rows. Crops may be annual or perennial, and may be planted in rotation with other irrigated crops.

Row and field crops are usually established on the State's most fertile soils, which historically supported an abundance of wildlife unequalled on other sites, but many species are now controlled by fencing (e.g. deer), trapping (e.g., wild pigs), and poisoning (e.g., rodents) to prevent excessive crop losses. However, availability of irrigation water during dryer months and drought benefits many wildlife species as a source of water (CDFW 2025a).

Barren Lands

Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Barren lands within agricultural lands generally present in the form of disked or plowed agricultural fields (CDFW 2025a).

Agricultural – Orchard

Evergreen Orchards

Evergreen orchards are typically dominated by a single species of tree, such as almonds, apples, apricots, peaches, pecans, and walnuts for deciduous orchards and avocados, grapefruit, lemons, limes, olives, oranges, and tangerines for evergreen orchards. Trees range in height at maturity depending on the species, ranging from 10 feet for dwarf varieties to upwards of 60 feet. The understory is usually composed of bare soil or cover crops or low-growing grasses, which are often intensively managed. Orchards are planted on deep fertile soils which once supported productive and diverse natural habitats. The orchards still provide anthropogenic habitat that offers wildlife, such as deer and rabbit that commonly browse on the tree foliage, an area for foraging and cover that allows animals to move through the region. Many wildlife species act as biological control agents by feeding on weed seeds and insect pests (CDFW 2025a).

Agricultural – Vineyard and Bush Fruit

Vineyard

Vineyards are composed of single species planted in rows, usually supported on wood and/or wire trellises with open space between rows. Rows under the vines are often sprayed with herbicides to prevent growth of herbaceous plants. Between rows of vines, grasses and other herbaceous plants may be planted or allowed to grow as a cover crop to control erosion (CDFW 2025a).

California Mixed Evergreen Forest and Woodland

Closed-Cone Pine-Cypress

The closed-cone pine-cypress habitat is typically dominated by a single species of one of the closed-cone pines or cypress with variable height and canopy cover based on species makeup. Cypress-dominated habitats usually occur as "arboreal islands" amongst chaparral or forest types, and pine-dominated habitats are generally patches with surrounding chaparral, Montane Hardwood-Conifer or Mixed Conifer habitats. Great horned owls and red-tailed hawks will nest in closed-cone pine forests, and numerous other species make use of the closed-cone pine-cypress habitat for feeding and cover (CDFW 2025a).

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus habitats generally include monotypic stands of *Eucalyptus spp.* and range from single-species thickets to scattered trees to dense stands with closed canopies. Tree heights typically range from 87 to 264 feet, depending on species and spacing. Eucalyptus woodlands are found at low elevations, where freezing is not a problem. Most eucalyptus have been artificially established, usually in and around urban/rural areas. However, eucalyptus grow quickly and can be invasive and are known to become established along stream courses or within natural habitats, encroaching upon and outcompeting existing native vegetation. Eucalyptus habitats serve as roosts, perches, and nest sites for a number of bird species, particularly raptors, as well as overwintering sites for monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) (CDFW 2025a).

Chaparral

Chamise-redshank and Mixed Chaparral

Chaparral habitats are dominated by shrubs, often with thick, stiff, waxy evergreen leaves, which grow to be dense, nearly impenetrable thickets. Mixed chaparral habitats are comprised of a variable patchwork of shrub species, such as buckwheat, chamise, toyon, poison oak, ceanothus, and manzanita, whereas chamise-redshank chaparral may consist of nearly pure stands (50 percent or more relative cover) of chamise or redshank, a mixture of both, or with other shrubs such as toyon, white sage, and ceanothus.

Mixed and chamise-redshank chaparral often occur as a mosaic on low to middle elevation slopes below several woodland and forest types. Compared to chamise-redshank chaparral, mixed chaparral generally occupies more mesic sites at higher elevations or on north-facing slopes. No wildlife species are restricted to only mixed chaparral habitat; however, chamise-redshank chaparral provides habitat for deer, small mammals, birds, and reptiles (CDFW 2025a).

Coastal Scrub

Coastal scrub is a native vegetation community that is typically found on stabilized backdune slopes, ridges, and flats along the coast. Soils are typically sandy to sandy loam. Central coastal scrub typically forms a mosaic with other communities including coast bluff scrub, maritime chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and coastal prairie. Vegetation in this habitat type is composed of soft scrub of moderate to high cover and is dominated by native mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), common California-aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia* var. *filaginifolia*), dune bush lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), and sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*). Central coastal scrub provides habitat for a variety of vertebrate species (CDFW 2025a).

Developed – Ruderal – Landscaped

Developed – ruderal – landscaped areas refer to those which have been temporarily or permanently disturbed by human activities and include, but are not limited to, areas of residential, commercial, and industrial development; areas of nonnative vegetation resulting from human activity and disturbance, such as grading; and areas of ornamental landscaping.

Barren Lands

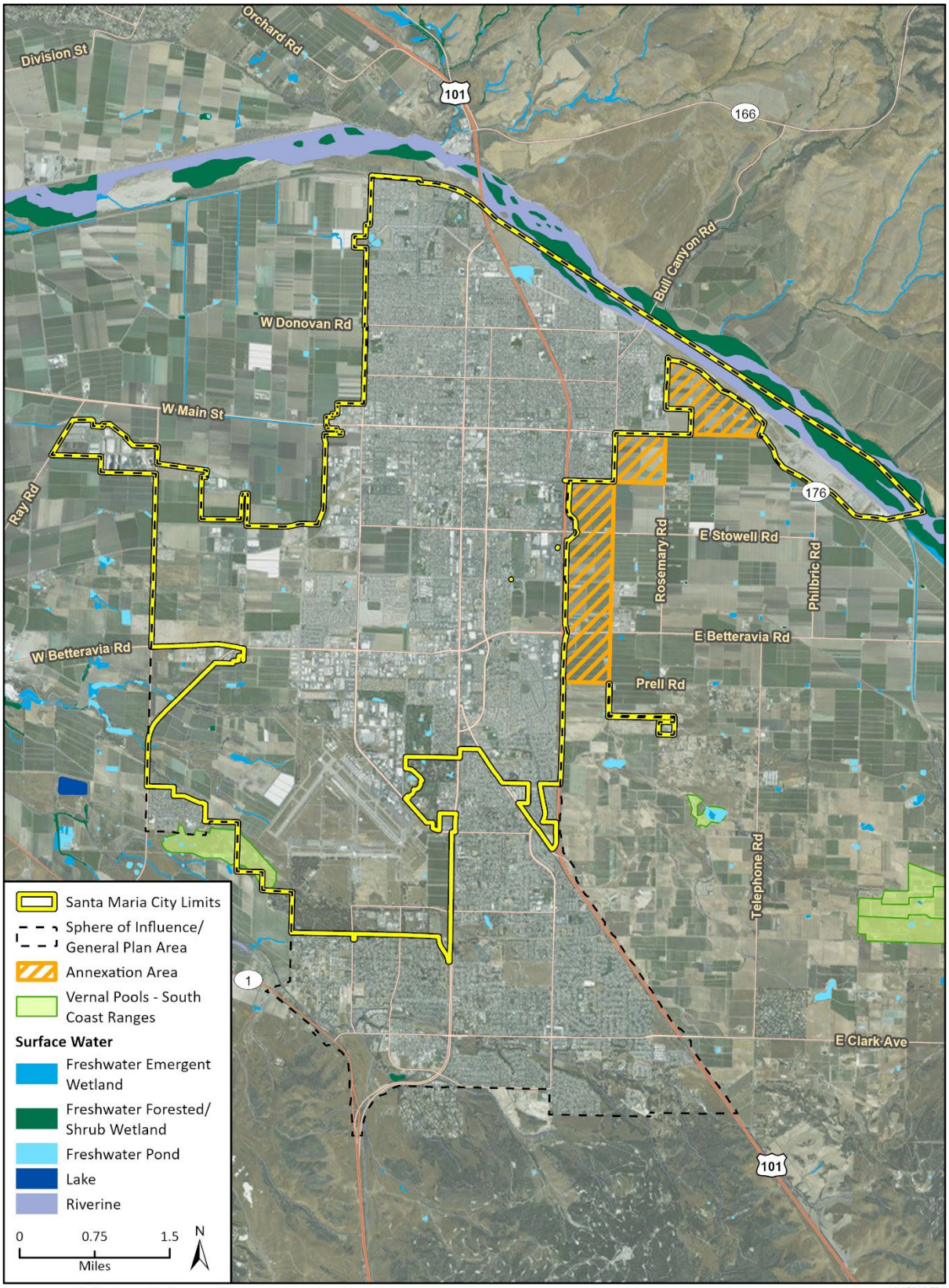
Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Urban settings covered in pavement and buildings may also be classified as barren as long as vegetation, including non-native landscaping, does not reach the percent cover thresholds for vegetated habitats (CDFW 2025a).

Freshwater Marsh and Water

Wetlands and Streams

Wetlands and waterways, sourced from NWI and shown in Figure 4.3-2, are highly productive habitats for plants and wildlife. Coastal wetlands and riparian wetlands (linear areas adjacent to streams, creeks and drainages) are especially productive for plants, because recurrent flooding in these areas delivers influxes of soil and nutrients. Riverine refers to areas with intermittently or continuously running water, such as rivers and streams. Riverine habitats are found adjacent to riparian areas and can be contiguous to lacustrine and fresh emergent wetland habitats. Riverine areas provide habitat for many species of waterfowl, raptors, insectivorous birds, and mammals. Lacustrine refers to inland depressions or dammed riverine channels containing standing water and can vary from small ponds to large lakes or reservoirs. Lacustrine systems provide habitat for many species of small birds and raptors, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Permanent lacustrine systems support fish life, while intermittent types generally do not. Fresh emergent wetlands are characterized by frequently flooded areas with erect, herbaceous vegetation. Fresh emergent wetlands are among the most productive wildlife habitats in California, and provide food, cover, and water for more than 160 species of birds and numerous mammals, reptiles, and amphibians (CDFW 2025a).

Figure 4.3-2 Wetlands Within the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by NWI, 2024; BIOS, ds948, 2025; City of Santa Maria, 2026.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Wetlands

Santa Maria contains a number of United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-recognized wetlands, including freshwater ponds and freshwater emergent wetlands, concentrated in agricultural and open space areas, as well as freshwater forested and shrub wetland and riverine habitat along the Santa Maria River. These wetlands provide habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants; and provide a form of groundwater recharge and flooding prevention (City of Santa Maria 2020).

SOUTHERN VERNAL POOLS

Vernal pools are a type of temporary wetland that support plants and animals that are specifically adapted to living with very wet winter and spring conditions followed by very dry summer and fall conditions. Many specially-adapted crustaceans, amphibians, and insects occur only in vernal pools. Plant species associated with Southern Vernal Pools include Howell's foxtail (*Alopecurus howellii*), water pygmyweed (*Crassula aquatica*), needle spikerush (*Eleocharis acicularis*), common spikerush (*Eleocharis palustris*), western marsh cudweed (*Gnaphalium palustre*), meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*), toad rush (*Juncus bufonius*), flowering quillwort (*Lilaea scilloides*) and rough-nutlet popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys trachycarpus*) (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Barren Lands

Barren habitat is defined by the absence of vegetation, and includes any habitat with less than two percent total vegetation cover by herbaceous, desert, or non-wildland species and less than 10 percent cover by shrub or tree species. Along rivers and streams, barren land includes vertical river banks and canyon walls (CDFW 2025a).

~~b. Special Status Species~~

~~For the purposes of this analysis, special-status species were considered listed or non-listed special-status species if they were classified as one or more of the following:~~

- ~~**Listed Special-Status Species**~~
  - ~~Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), including proposed and candidate species.~~
  - ~~Species listed as candidate, threatened, or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).~~
  - ~~Plant species protected by the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (State Rare).~~
- ~~**Non-listed Special-Status Species**~~
  - ~~Species designated as Fully Protected (FP), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Watch List (WL) by the CDFW~~
  - ~~Birds designated as a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) by USFWS~~
  - ~~Sensitive species designated by USFWS~~
  - ~~Sensitive species designated by the United States Forest Service (USFS)~~
  - ~~Plants assigned a California Rare Plant Rank of 1 through 4 by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS)~~
  - ~~Species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act~~
  - ~~Bats considered by the Western Bat Working Group to be "High" or "Medium" priority~~

- ~~Species designated as locally important by the Local Agency and/or otherwise protected through ordinance, local policy, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), or Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).~~

~~Queries of the USFWS's IPaC, CNDDB, and CNPS's online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CRPR) were conducted to obtain comprehensive information regarding special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities known or with potential to occur in the plan area. Queries of the CNPS inventory and CNDDB database included the *Santa Maria* and *Twitchell Dam* United States Geological Service (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix B of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).~~

Grassland

Annual Grassland

Annual grasslands are characterized by open grasslands composed primarily of non-native annual plant species, including wild oats (*Avena fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), red brome (*Bromus rubens*), and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*). This vegetation community occurs mostly on flat plains to gently rolling foothills. Species composition depends largely on weather patterns and livestock grazing. Fall rains cause germination of annual plant seeds. Plants grow slowly during the cool winter months, remaining low in stature until spring, when temperatures increase and stimulate more rapid growth. Many wildlife species use this community for foraging, such as black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and a variety of bird species (CDFW 2025a).

Perennial Grasslands

Perennial grassland habitats occur in two forms in California: coastal prairie, found in areas of northern California under maritime influence, and relics in habitats now dominated by annual grasses and forbs (see Annual Grassland description above). Coastal prairie perennial grassland habitats are dominated by perennial grass species such as California oatgrass, Pacific hairgrass, and sweet vernalgrass. Perennial grassland habitats typically occurs on ridges and south-facing slopes, alternating with forest and scrub in the valleys and on north-facing slopes.

Perennial grasslands provide high-quality habitat for many species, including the common garter snake, western terrestrial garter snake, northern harrier, barn owl, burrowing owl, western kingbird, Say's phoebe, barn swallow, western meadowlark, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, Townsend mole, coast mole, Botta's pocket gopher, western harvest mouse, California vole, long-tailed vole, and Oregon vole. Perennial grasslands often serve as feeding habitat for the turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, peregrine falcon, western bluebird, fringe-tailed bat, big brown bat, striped skunk, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbit, brush rabbit, Roosevelt elk, and black-tailed deer (CDFW 2025a).

Pasture

Pasture vegetation is a mix of perennial grasses and legumes that normally provide 100 percent canopy closure. Old or poorly drained pastures may have patches of weeds in excess. The mix of grasses and legumes varies according to management practices such as seed mixture, fertilization, soil type, irrigation, weed control, and the type of livestock on the pasture. Pastures are planted on flat and gently rolling terrain and may be irrigated. Pastures are used by a variety of wildlife

depending upon geographic area and types of adjacent habitats. Ground-nesting birds, including waterfowl, nest in pastures if adequate residual vegetation is present at the onset of the nesting season (CDFW 2025a).

Western Oak Woodland and Savanna

Coastal Oak Woodland

Coast oak woodland is a native vegetation community that consists of deciduous and evergreen hardwoods, typically dominated by coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*). Coast live oak woodlands are variable, ranging from dense woodlands (sometimes intergrading with mixed evergreen forests) on the more mesic north-facing slopes and canyons, to an open savanna on drier, more exposed slopes where the soils are usually shallower. The understory may range from absent to dense. Typical understory species include shade tolerant shrubs such as native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*); and native herbaceous plants such as fiesta flower (*Pholistoma auritum*), miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), and various fern species. Coastal oak woodlands are found in coastal foothills and valleys and provides important habitat for wildlife, including nesting sites, foraging areas for small mammals, and microclimates suitable for amphibians, reptiles, and fungi (CDFW 2025a).

Western Riparian Woodland and Shrubland

Montane Riparian

Montane riparian is a variably vegetated community largely consisting of broad-leaved winter deciduous trees up to 98 feet tall. Such species may include native cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), with a sparse understory. This vegetation community is associated with lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and springs, where water may be permanent or ephemeral, and generally occurs below 8000 feet above mean sea level. Montane riparian habitats provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, and escape, nesting, and thermal cover for an abundance of wildlife (CDFW 2025a).

Valley Foothill Riparian

Valley foothill riparian is a native vegetation community that contains mostly winter deciduous trees, such as native cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). The canopy height can grow up to 98 feet in a mature riparian forest. Typical understory shrub layer species include native California blackberry, blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), poison oak, and willows (*Salix* spp.). This vegetation community is found in valleys bordered by sloping alluvial fans, slightly dissected terraces, lower foothills, and coastal plains. They are generally associated with low velocity flows, flood plains, and gentle topography. Valleys provide deep alluvial soils and a high water table. The substrate is coarse, gravelly or rocky soils more or less permanently moist. Valley foothill riparian habitats provide food, water, migration and dispersal corridors, and escape, nesting, and thermal cover for an abundance of wildlife (CDFW 2025a).

c. Special Status Species

For the purposes of this analysis, special-status species were considered listed or non-listed special-status species if they were classified as one or more of the following:

- **Listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), including proposed and candidate species.
  - Species listed as candidate, threatened, or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).
  - Plant species protected by the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) (State Rare).
- **Non-listed Special-Status Species**
  - Species designated as Fully Protected (FP), Species of Special Concern (SSC), or Watch List (WL) by the CDFW
  - Birds designated as a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by USFWS
  - Sensitive species designated by the United States Forest Service (USFS)
  - Plants assigned a California Rare Plant Rank of 1 through 4 by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS)
  - Species protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
  - Bats considered by the Western Bat Working Group to be "High" or "Medium" priority
  - Species designated as locally important by the Local Agency and/or otherwise protected through ordinance, local policy, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), or Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).

Queries of the USFWS's IPaC, CNDDB, and CNPS's online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (CRPR) were conducted to obtain comprehensive information regarding special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities known or with potential to occur in the plan area. Queries of the CNPS inventory and CNDDB database included the *Santa Maria* and *Twitchell Dam* United States Geological Service (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The results of these scientific database queries are provided as Appendix ~~B~~ C of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Special-Status Plant Species

Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 17 special-status plant species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix ~~B~~C shows the special-status plant species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.

The 13 special-status plant species with the potential to occur in the plan area are listed below with their federal and/or State special-status designation:

- Miles' milk-vetch (*Astragalus didymocarpus var. milesianus*) – CRPR 1B.2
- California jewelflower (*Caulanthus californicus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered, CRPR 1B.1
- La Graciosa thistle (*Cirsium loncholepis*) – Federally Endangered, State Threatened, CRPR 1B.1

- Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus ssp. Maritimus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered, CRPR 1B.2
- Paniculate tarplant (*Deinandra paniculata*) – CRPR 4.2
- Dune larkspur (*Delphinium parryi ssp. blochmaniae*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Blochman's leafy daisy (*Erigeron blochmaniae*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Suffrutescent wallflower (*Erysimum suffrutescens*) – CRPR 4.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata var. puberula*) - CRPR 1B.1, USFS Sensitive
- Blushing layia (*Layia erubescens*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Large-flowered leptosiphon (*Leptosiphon grandifloras*) – CRPR 4.2
- Southern curly-leaved monardella (*Monardella sinuata ssp. sinuate*) – CRPR 1B.2
- Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) – Federally Threatened

Special-Status Wildlife Species

Based on the database queries and literature review, a total of 31 special-status invertebrate, fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the plan area (Appendix ~~B~~C). Of these species, 13 were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area, and 9 were identified with a moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Appendix B shows the special-status wildlife species and habitat requirements for each species within the vicinity of the plan area.

The 22 special-status wildlife species with low to moderate potential to occur in the plan area are listed below with their federal and/or State special-status designation:

- Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) – Federally Threatened
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus pop. 1*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, USFS Sensitive
- California tiger salamander – Santa Barbara County DPS (*Ambystoma californiense pop. 2*) – Federally Endangered, State Threatened, CDFW Watch List
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) – Federally Endangered, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) – Federally Threatened, State Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Southwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive
- Northern California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*) – Federal Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) – State Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) - CDFW Fully Protected, CDFW Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) – State Candidate, CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) – Federally Threatened, State Endangered

- Northern harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Federally Designated, State Endangered, CDFW Fully Protected, USFS Sensitive
- California gull (*Laurs californicus*) - CDFW Watch List, USFWS BCC
- Yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nuttalli*) - USFWS BCC
- Black skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFWS BCC
- Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*) - USFWS BCC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) – Federally Endangered, State Endangered
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern, USFS Sensitive, Western Bat Working Group "High" priority
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) - CDFW Species of Special Concern

d. Nesting Birds

Suitable nesting sites for avian species protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Fish and Game Code (CFGC), including shrubs, trees, man-made structures, and the ground surface occur throughout the plan area. Some species prefer vegetation for nesting, including ornamental vegetation and some species can be found nesting in man-made structures, such as power poles or the eaves of buildings. Nesting birds may occur during the breeding season (generally February 1 through August 31 but beginning January 1 for some raptor species).

e. Sensitive Communities and Critical Habitat

Sensitive Communities

The CNDDB identifies one environmentally sensitive natural community in the city, Southern Vernal Pool, located west of the Santa Maria Public Airport (City of Santa Maria 2020).

Critical Habitat

As shown in Figure 4.3-3, according to the USFWS, designated critical habitat for California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) exists in the southernmost extents of City limits, south of the Santa Maria Airport. Designated critical habitat for La Graciosa thistle exists within the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Designated critical habitat for steelhead trout exists through a small portion of the northeastern-most extents of City limits. Designated critical habitat for California red-legged frog exists along the southernmost border of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Designated critical habitat for Lompoc yerba santa exists south of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area (USFWS 2025b).

f. Wildlife Movement Corridors

Wildlife movement corridors, or habitat linkages, are generally defined as connections between habitat patches that allow for physical and genetic exchange between otherwise isolated animal populations. Such linkages may serve a local purpose, such as providing a linkage between foraging and denning areas, or they may be regional in nature. Some habitat linkages may serve as migration corridors, wherein animals periodically move away from an area and then subsequently return. Others may be important as dispersal corridors for young animals. A group of habitat linkages in an area can form a wildlife corridor network.

The habitats within the linkages do not necessarily need to be the same or of the same quality as the habitats that are being linked. Rather, the linkage merely needs to contain sufficient cover and forage to allow temporary inhabitation by ground-dwelling species. Typically, habitat linkages are contiguous strips of natural areas, though dense plantings of landscape vegetation can be used by certain disturbance-tolerant species. Depending upon the species using a corridor, specific physical resources (such as rock outcroppings, vernal pools, or oak trees) may need to be located within the habitat link at certain intervals to allow slower-moving species to traverse the link. For highly mobile or aerial species, habitat linkages may be discontinuous patches of suitable resources spaced sufficiently close together to permit travel along a route in a short period of time. Migration corridors can be bordered on either site by urban land uses, and within the City limits these corridors often include barriers to movement such as developed areas and roads.

As shown in Figure 4.3-4, CDFW defines the area within the plan area as having "Limited Connectivity Opportunity". A small area of "Connections with Implementation Flexibility," which has connectivity importance, but has not been identified as a channelized area, species corridor, or habitat linkage is present in the southern extents of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. CDFW does not identify any essential habitat connectivity areas within the City's Sphere of Influence (CDFW 2025b). However, there is a potential that the Santa Maria River is used by wildlife to access habitats in the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains (City of Santa Maria 2020).

4.3.2 Regulatory Setting

a. Federal Regulations

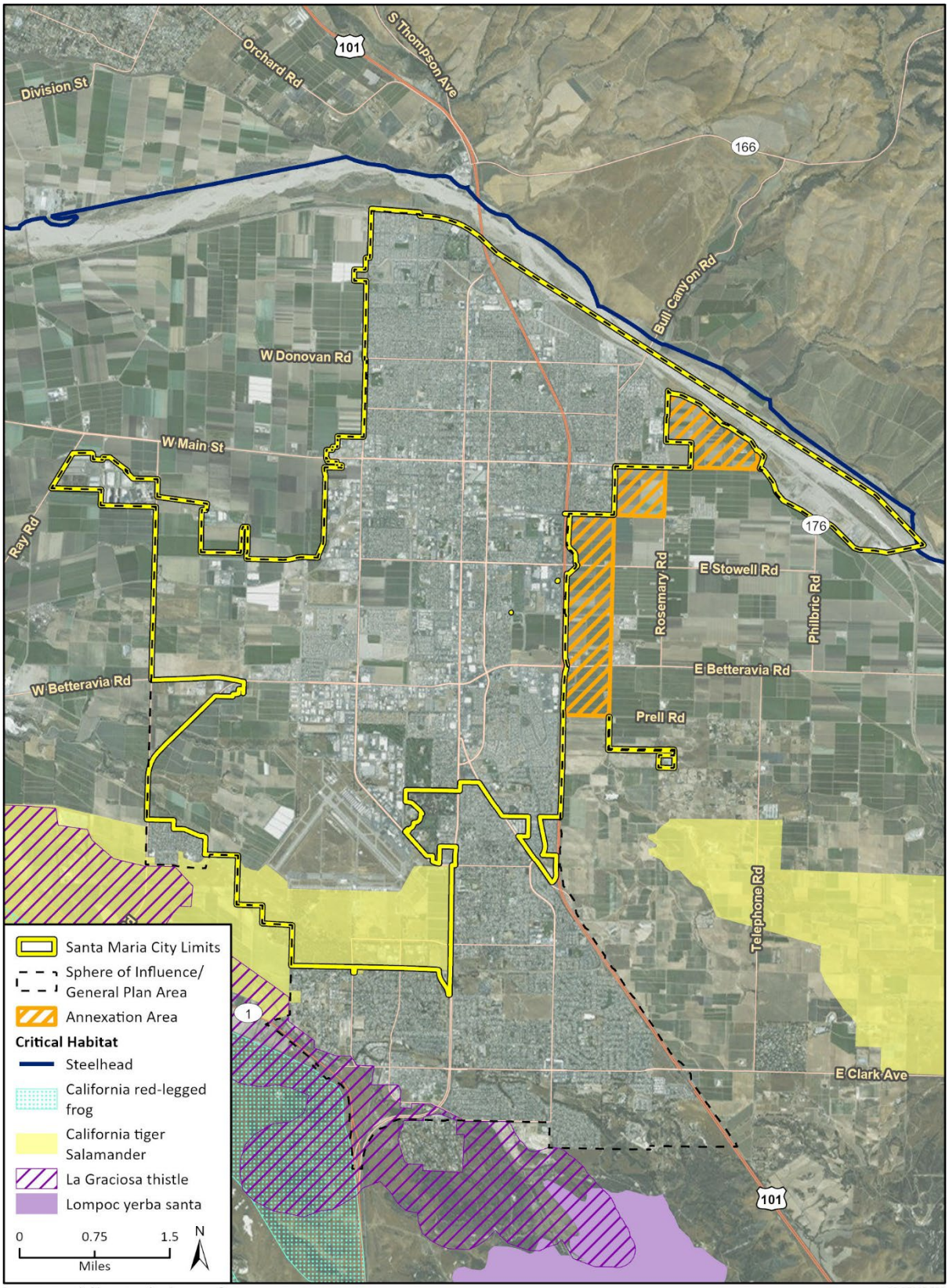
Federal Endangered Species Act

The FESA of 1973 and subsequent amendments provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened species, and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The FESA is intended to prevent the unlawful "take" of listed fish, wildlife, and plant species. Section 9(a)(1)(B) specifically states take of species listed as threatened or endangered is unlawful. Take is defined as any action that would harass, harm, pursue, hunt, wound, shoot, kill, trap, capture, or collect any threatened or endangered species. Section 10 of the FESA allows the USFWS to issue incidental take permits if take of a listed species may occur during otherwise lawful activities. Section 10(a)(1)(B) requires a Habitat Conservation Plan for an incidental take permit on non-federal lands. Section 7 of the FESA requires federal agencies to aid in the conservation of listed species, and to ensure that the activities of federal agencies will not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat. The USFWS and NOAA are responsible for administration of the FESA and have regulatory authority over federally listed species.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The MBTA makes it unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, or kill migratory birds, and prohibits the removal of nests occupied by migratory birds. The USFWS has regulatory authority for the MBTA.

Figure 4.3-3 Critical Habitat Within the Plan Area



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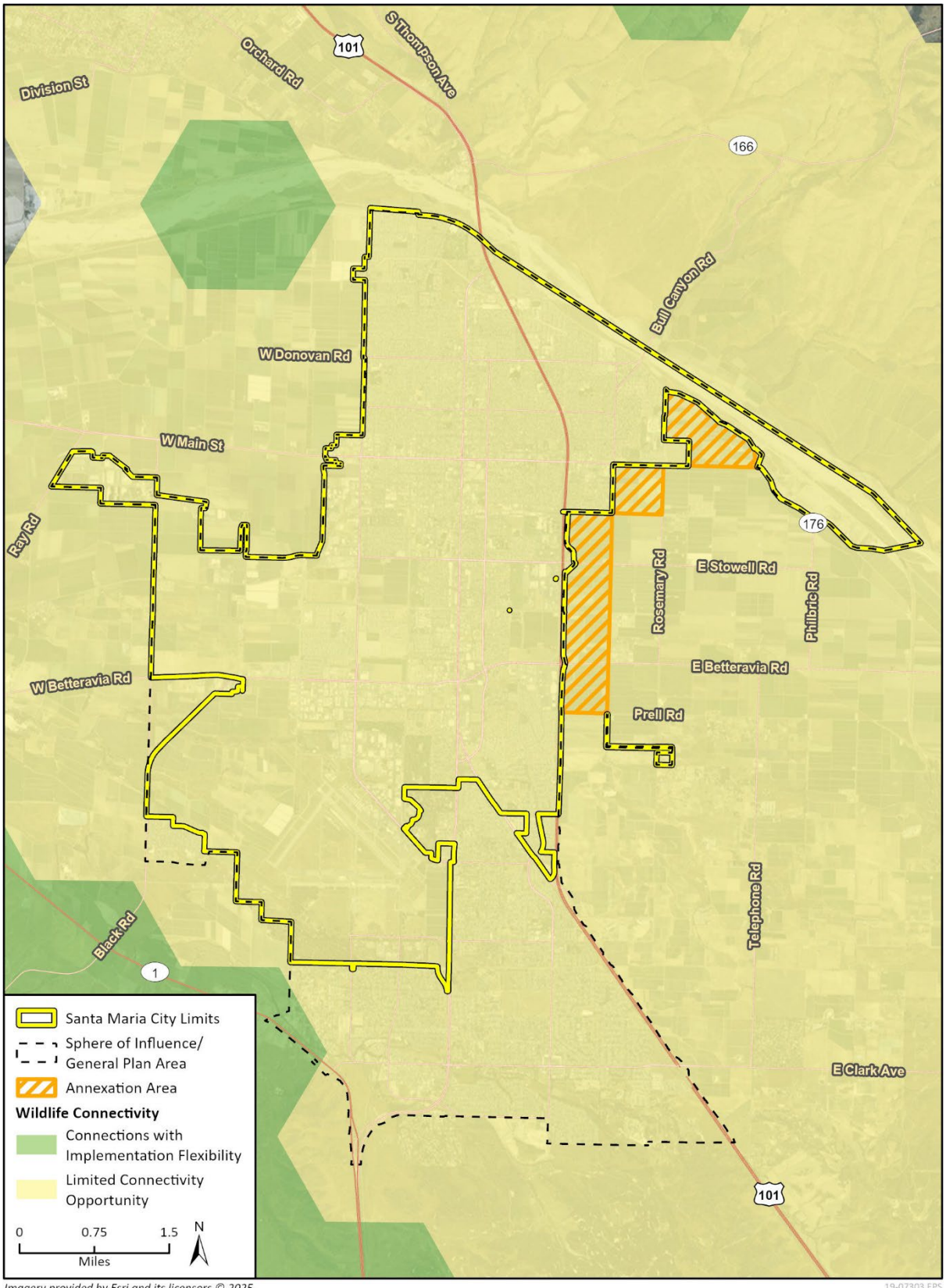
Additional data provided by NOAA, 2023; USFWS, 2023.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Critical Habitat

Figure 4.3-4 Wildlife Connectivity Within the Plan Area



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Additional data provided by CDFW, 2025.

19-07303 EPS
Fig X Wildlife Connectivity

Clean Water Act

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), under provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and USACE implementing regulations, has jurisdiction over the placement of dredged or fill material into "waters of the United States." Congress enacted the CWA "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." In practice, the boundaries of certain waters subject to USACE jurisdiction under Section 404 have not been fully defined. Previous regulations codified in 1986 defined "waters of the United States" as traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, all other waters that could affect interstate or foreign commerce, impoundments of waters of the United States, tributaries, the territorial seas, and adjacent wetlands.

USACE jurisdictional limits are typically identified by the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) or the landward edge of adjacent wetlands, where present. The OHWM is the "line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding area" (33 Code of Federal Regulations 328.3).

The USACE defines wetlands as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (33 CFR 328.3). The USACE's delineation procedures identify wetlands in the field based on indicators of three wetland parameters: hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

The USFWS also has responsibility for project review under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. This statute requires that all federal agencies consult with USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and the State's wildlife agency (CDFW) for activities that affect, control, or modify streams and other water bodies. Under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and CDFW review applications for permits issued under Section 404 and provide comments about potential environmental impacts.

b. State Regulations

California Endangered Species Act

The CDFW is responsible for administration of the CESA. For projects that may affect both a State and federal listed species, compliance with the FESA will satisfy the CESA, provided the CDFW determines that the federal incidental take authorization is consistent with the CESA.

"Take" is defined in CFGC Section 86 as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." The CESA allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful activities under CFGC Section 2081. Project proponents wishing to obtain incidental take permits can do so through a permitting process outlined in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 783. Additionally, some sensitive mammals and birds are protected by the state as Fully Protected Mammals or Fully Protected Birds, as described in the CFGC, Sections 4700 and 3511, respectively.

Projects that may result in a take of a California listed species require a take permit under the CESA. The federal and State acts lend protection to species considered rare enough by the scientific

community and trustee agencies to warrant special consideration, particularly with regard to protection of isolated populations, nesting or den locations, communal roosts, and other essential habitat. Unlike the FESA, the CESA prohibits the take of not just listed endangered or threatened species, but also candidate species (species petitioned for listing).

The CESA defines an endangered species as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease.

A threatened species is defined as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by this chapter. Any animal determined by the commission as rare on or before January 1, 1985 is a threatened species.

Candidate species are defined as:

> …a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that the commission has formally noticed as being under review by the department for addition to either the list of endangered species or the list of threatened species, or a species for which the commission has published a notice of proposed regulation to add the species to either list.

Candidate species may be afforded temporary protection as though they were already listed as threatened or endangered at the discretion of the Fish and Game Commission. Unlike the FESA, CESA does not include listing provisions for invertebrate species. Article 3, Sections 2080 through 2085, of the CESA addresses the taking of threatened or endangered species by stating:

> …no person shall import into this State, export out of this State, or take, possess, purchase, or sell within this State, any species, or any part or product thereof, that the commission determines to be an endangered species or a threatened species, or attempt any of those acts, except as otherwise provided.

California Fish and Game Code - Nesting Bird Protection

According to CFGC Section 3503, it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird (except English sparrows [*Passer domesticus*] and European starlings [*Sturnus vulgaris*]). Sections 3503 and 3513 prohibit the taking of specific birds, their nests, eggs, or any portion thereof during the nesting season. Section 3503.5 specifically protects birds in the orders Falconiformes and Strigiformes (birds-of-prey). Section 3513 overlaps with the federal MBTA, prohibiting the take or possession of any migratory nongame bird.

California Native Plant Protection Act

The NPPA was enacted in 1977 and allows the California Fish and Wildlife Commission to designate plants as rare or endangered. Currently, 64 species, subspecies, and varieties of plants are protected as rare under the NPPA. The NPPA prohibits take of endangered or rare native plants but includes some exceptions for agricultural and nursery operations; emergencies; and after properly notifying

CDFW for vegetation removal from canals, roads, and other sites; changes in land use; and in certain other situations. Effective in 2015, CDFW promulgated regulations (14 CCR 786.9) under the authority of the NPPA, establishing that the CESA permitting procedures (CFG Code Section 2081) would be applied to plants listed under the NPPA as "Rare." With this change, there is little practical difference between regulations and protocols for plants listed under CESA and those listed under the NPPA.

Clean Water Act Section 401, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) have jurisdiction over “waters of the State,” which are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state (California Water Code sec. 13050(e)). These agencies also have responsibilities for administering Section 401 of the CWA. In addition, where Federal jurisdiction is not asserted (for example, due to a lack of connectivity to a Relatively Permanent Waters and Traditional Navigable Waters), RWQCB assert jurisdiction over “waters of the State” pursuant to Section 13263 of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, which are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State. In this event, the SWRCB may issue general Waste Discharge Requirements regarding discharges to “isolated” waters of the State if limiting criteria are not exceeded (Water Quality Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ, Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Dredged or Fill Discharges to Waters Deemed by the USACE to be Outside of Federal Jurisdiction) or project-specific Waste Discharge Requirements.

The SWRCB and RWQCBs have not established regulations for field determinations of waters of the state except for wetlands. In many cases the RWQCBs interpret the limits of waters of the State to be bounded by the OHWM unless isolated conditions or ephemeral waters are present. However, in the absence of statewide guidance, each RWQCB may interpret jurisdictional boundaries within their region and the SWRCB has encouraged applicants to confirm jurisdictional limits with their RWQCB before submitting applications. As determined by the RWQCB, waters of the State may include riparian areas or other locations outside the OHWM, leading to a larger jurisdictional area over a given water body compared to the USACE.

Procedures for defining wetland waters of the State pursuant to the SWRCB’s State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredged or Fill Material to Waters of the State went into effect May 28, 2020. The SWRCB defines an area as wetland if, under normal circumstances:

> the area has continuous or recurrent saturation of the upper substrate caused by groundwater, or shallow surface water, or both; the duration of such saturation is sufficient to cause anaerobic conditions in the upper substrate; and the area’s vegetation is dominated by hydrophytes or the area lacks vegetation.

The SWRCB’s Implementation Guidance for the Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges of Dredge and Fill Material to Waters of the State (2020), states that waters of the U.S. and waters of the State should be delineated using the standard USACE delineation procedures, taking into consideration that the methods shall be modified only to allow for the fact that a lack of vegetation does not preclude an area from meeting the definition of a wetland.

California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.

Pursuant to CFGC Section 1600, CDFW has authority over all perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, and lakes in the state, and requires any person, state or local governmental agency, or public utility to notify the CDFW before beginning any activity that would "substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or bank of, any river, stream, or lake, or deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake" that supports fish or wildlife resources.

A stream is defined as a "body of water that flows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel having banks and supports fish or other aquatic life. This includes watercourses having a surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation" (CCR, Title 14 Section 1.72). A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement may be required for any project that would result in an adverse impact to a river, stream, or lake. CDFW jurisdiction typically extends to the top of the bank and out to the outer edge of adjacent riparian vegetation if present. However, CDFW can take jurisdiction over a body of flowing water and the landform that conveys it, including water sources and adjoining landscape elements that are byproducts of and affected by interactions with flowing water without regard to size, duration, or the timing of flow.

CDFW Special Animals List

Special-status wildlife species are those species included on the CDFW "Special Animals" list. "Special Animal" is a general term that refers to all the taxa the CNDDB is interested in tracking, regardless of their legal or protection status (CDFW 2025c). The CDFW considers the taxa on this list to be those of greatest conservation need. The species on this list generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Officially listed or proposed for listing under the CESA and/or FESA
- State or Federal candidate for possible listing
- Taxa that meet the criteria for listing, even if not currently included on any list, as described in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15380
- Taxa considered by the Department to be a Species of Special Concern
- Taxa that are biologically rare, very restricted in distribution, declining throughout their range, or have a critical vulnerable stage in their life cycle that warrants monitoring
- Populations in California that may be on the periphery of a taxon's range but are threatened with extirpation in California

c. Local Regulations

Santa Maria Municipal Code

The City of Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-8 (Urban Forestry), 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention), and 12-44 (Landscape Standards) implement measures which protect biological resources.

Chapter 8-8 implements the City's Urban Forestry Program, and provides a comprehensive urban forest management strategy which protects and enhances the City's urban forest and sets forth the following requirements related to trees within the City:

- Requires that one tree be planted for every forty feet of street frontage.
- Enforces the protection of City managed trees requires tree removals to be approved by the Recreation and Parks Commission.
- Requires provisions for tree protection and replacement during construction activities.
- Outlines the requirements for replacement trees, including that if healthy trees are removed, they are replaced at a two to one ratio according to the City's Landscape and Irrigation Standards (2007).
- Protects historic and heritage trees.

Chapter 8-12A implements requirements designed to reduce substantial adverse effects to water quality in the City. These include the following:

- Implementation of construction and operational Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce potential pollutants and protect water quality.
- Compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater discharge permits.
- Prohibition of discharge, modification, deposition, construction, or placement of material into a water course.

Chapter 9-68 implements requirements designed to minimize and prevent flood damage. These include:

- Restrictions around the alteration of natural floodplains, stream channels, and natural protective barriers.
- Minimizing filling, grading, dredging, and other development which may increase flood damage.
- Preventing and regulating the construction of flood barriers that would unnaturally divert floodwaters.
- Requires development permits and sets construction standards for projects within flood hazard or floodplains.

Chapter 12-44 implements landscaping design standards intended to preserve trees. These include:

- Listing of existing trees in excess of six inches in diameter and existing street trees within site planning documents.
- Restrictions on allowed grading alterations within three inches of a tree trunk.
- Requires approvals for tree removal and tree replacement

4.3.3 Impact Analysis

a. Significance Thresholds and Methodology

Methodology

The assessment of potential impacts to biological resources were informed based on a review of readily available information from the USFWS NWI, USFWS IPaC, CDFW CNDDB, the NOAA Protected Resources Application, the City of Santa Maria Existing Conditions Report (2020), and CDFW vegetation datasets. As a programmatic document, this EIR presents an assessment of the potential for adoption of the plan to result in significant impacts to biological resources. Because the EIR is a long-term document intended to guide actions for many years into the future, this analysis relies on program-level and qualitative evaluation.

The adoption of the 2045 General Plan does not include physical development that could directly impact biological resources. However, implementation of the 2045 General Plan would facilitate development within the City's SOI. Each proposed project under the 2045 General Plan would require subsequent analysis to evaluate project-specific impacts to biological resources, significance, need for project-specific mitigation, and any subsequent discretionary permits or coordination with resource agencies (e.g., USFWS, USACE, CDFW, RWQCB) that may be required.

Significance Thresholds

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project may be deemed to have a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
2. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
3. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means;
4. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites;
5. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or
6. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Impact BIO-1 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE EFFECT ON SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES, EITHER DIRECTLY OR AS A RESULT OF HABITAT MODIFICATION. IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL REGULATIONS AND POLICIES, AS WELL AS MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-1(A) THROUGH BIO-1(K) WOULD ENSURE THAT IMPACTS FROM DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE ON CANDIDATE, SENSITIVE, OR SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION INCORPORATED.

As shown in Figure 4.3-1, the City is primarily developed; however, the plan area contains grassland, chapparal, riparian, wetland, and oak woodland areas which could serve as habitat for special status species. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, *Setting*, there are 13 special status plant species and 22 special status animal species with potential to occur within the plan area. Critical habitat for California tiger salamander is also present within the plan area. Potentially significant effects on candidate, sensitive, or special status species would occur if temporary disturbance during construction or permanent development facilitated by the plan would result in incremental direct loss of habitat, fragmentation of larger open areas and wildlife corridors, or disturbance of special status wildlife or vegetation species.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following policies which would minimize impacts to protected biological resources and preserve habitats that may support special-status species and sensitive habitats, including nesting migratory birds:

Policy COS-1.1: Natural habitat and wildlife corridors. Protect and, to the extent feasible, expand natural habitat and wildlife corridor areas, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and Sphere of Influence.

Policy COS-1.3: Natural biodiversity. Increase natural biodiversity through the reintroduction of native species, removal of non-native, invasive species, and proper sustainable maintenance of vegetated areas.

Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species. Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or ~~s~~State endangered and threatened species and non-listed special status species through the development and permit review process. Condition development projects to avoid impacts to these species, to the greatest extent feasible.

Policy COS-4.1: Santa Maria River protection. Protect and enhance the beneficial uses of the Santa Maria River to support essential community and environmental needs, including municipal and domestic water supply, agricultural supply, and groundwater recharge.

Policy COS-4.3: Groundwater contamination. Minimize groundwater contamination from current and previous oil and gas operations.

Policy COS-5.3: Fugitive dust emissions. Mitigate air pollutants and fugitive dust emissions resulting from construction and demolition activities by requiring the use of best management practices.

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

~~**Policy PFS-2.6: Contaminant mitigation.** Manage contaminated sites to protect natural systems from groundwater infiltration and stormwater runoff.~~

Policy S-3.2: Agricultural runoff reduction. Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.

Special-Status Plants

Thirteen special-status plants have been documented in the plan area, including: Miles' milk-vetch, California jewelflower, La Graciosa thistle, salt marsh bird's-beak, paniculate tarplant, dune larkspur, Blochman's leafy daisy, Suffrutescent wallflower, Mesa horkelia, blushing layia, large-flowered leptosiphon, southern curly-leaved monardella, and spreading navarretia.

While these 13 special-status plants have a low potential to occur within the plan area, development facilitated by the plan could result in direct impacts to special-status plant species through vegetation removal, soil disturbance, and habitat modification during construction activities, potentially leading to the loss of individuals and degradation of habitat. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of habitat. Therefore, impacts to special-status plant species would be potentially significant.

Special-Status Wildlife

Thirteen special-status wildlife species were identified with low potential to occur within the plan area, and nine were identified with a moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Those with low potential to occur include southwestern pond turtle, tricolored blackbird, golden eagle, marbled murrelet, northern harrier, bald eagle, California gull, yellow-billed magpie, black skimmer, Lawrence's goldfinch, least Bell's vireo, pallid bat, and American badger. Those with moderate potential to occur include vernal pool fairy shrimp, monarch butterfly, California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, western spadefoot, Northern California legless lizard, coast horned lizard, and burrowing owl.

Reptiles

Coast horned lizard and northern California legless lizard have a moderate potential to occur within the plan area, and southwestern pond turtles have low potential to occur within the plan area. Direct impacts to these species could occur if individuals are present in work areas during construction of development facilitated by the plan. Direct impacts to special-status reptile species could include injury or death as a result of individuals being crushed or buried by project vehicles, equipment, or displaced soil, entrapment of individuals in excavation areas, disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities), impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, reduction of refugia habitats, and accidental destruction of active burrows by construction vehicles or equipment. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat for these species. Potential indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan include the introduction or spread of invasive plant species, fugitive dust, standing water or food waste, and soil compaction that hinders burrowing. Indirect impacts to aquatic habitat for southwestern pond turtle include erosion, sedimentation, fire, and runoff of hazardous materials. Therefore, impacts to

coast horned lizard, northern California legless lizard, and southwestern pond turtle would be potentially significant.

Mammals

Bats have the potential to roost in buildings and trees, including street trees within the plan area. Impacts to pallid bats could occur if bat roosts are present in trees or buildings proposed for removal or in the vicinity of disturbance in undeveloped areas. These impacts could result in direct mortality or abandonment of maternal colonies, if present. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Impacts to pallid bat would be potentially significant.

If American badgers are present in disturbance areas or on access roads during construction of development facilitated by the plan, direct impacts to the species could occur; including injury or death resulting from vehicle collision, damage or destruction of occupied burrows, disturbance from construction noise/vibration, and loss or degradation of foraging habitat. Direct impacts may occur if disturbance at maternity dens resulting from construction noise/vibration or human presence negatively affects pup-rearing. The species may be indirectly impacted by impacts to its habitat including the spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and runoff of hazardous materials. Additionally, soil compaction in work areas may reduce habitat for prey species. Development facilitated by the plan could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Impacts to American badgers would be potentially significant.

Invertebrates

Monarch butterflies have the potential to overwinter in eucalyptus and pine-cypress groves throughout the plan area. Development facilitated by the plan could result in direct impacts to monarch butterfly if roosts are present in trees proposed for removal or in the vicinity of disturbance in undeveloped areas. Development facilitated by the plan could result in additional direct impacts to monarch butterflies could include disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities), impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, and reduction of refugia habitats. The species may be indirectly impacted by development facilitated by the plan due to habitat impacts, including the spread of invasive plants and fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities). Impacts to monarch butterfly would be potentially significant.

Vernal pool fairy shrimp are a federally threatened species with moderate potential to occur within the plan area. Suitable vernal pool habitat is present in the plan area near the Santa Maria Airport. If vernal pool fairy shrimp are present during construction and development facilitated by the proposed project, these species may be directly impacted through injury or mortality of individuals resulting from project vehicles or equipment, and habitat loss from leveling out or filling in the wetlands. Indirect impacts to vernal pool fairy shrimp could result from potential stormwater runoff from development activities entering potential suitable habitat during and post- construction. Stormwater runoff from development facilitated by the plan may result in degraded water quality and other essential water conditions that are required for species survival. Impacts to vernal pool fairy shrimp would be potentially significant.

Crotch's bumble bee is listed as a CDFW state candidate (SC) endangered species. The species inhabits various habitats in California between San Diego and Redding, including open grassland, shrublands, and chaparral in semi-urban settings. Crotch's bumble bee prefers food plant genera

including Antirrhinum, Phacelia, Clarkia, Dendromecon, Eschscholzia, and Eriogonum. The plan area is within the known range of this species, and suitable habitat and food genera are present in the vicinity of the plan area. While there are no CNDDB observations of this species in the plan area, based on the presence of suitable habitat as well as nearby occurrences and their transitory nature, this species has the potential to occur in the plan area. Impacts to Crotch's bumble bee would be potentially significant.

Birds

Construction activities associated with development facilitated by the plan could potentially result in impacts to birds and raptors, including tricolored blackbird, golden eagle, marbled murrelet, northern harrier, bald eagle, California gull, yellow-billed magpie, black skimmer, Lawrence's goldfinch, and least Bell's vireo. Development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts if they are disturbed by the noise and visual presence of personnel or equipment in construction areas or increased traffic in the vicinity (which may result in collisions). Indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan may include the introduction or spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and the runoff of hazardous materials, all of which could degrade the quality of bird habitat (especially in riparian habitat areas) and the quality of foraging habitat. These impacts would be potentially significant.

If burrowing owls are present in disturbance areas when construction activities associated with development facilitated by the plan occur, the species may be directly impacted through injury or mortality of individuals resulting from collisions with construction vehicles or equipment; destruction of occupied burrows and/or active nest sites; and disturbance from increased vehicle traffic, noise at work sites (resulting from grading, helicopter activity, or other construction activities), and human presence that could result in an interruption of normal behaviors or nest abandonment. The species may also be subject to direct impacts due to the loss or degradation of foraging habitat in work areas resulting from vegetation clearing, ground disturbance, and/or permanent development. Development facilitated by the plan may also have indirect impacts to burrowing owl, including introduction or spread of invasive plants, fugitive dust (resulting from grading or other construction activities), erosion, sedimentation, and the runoff of hazardous materials which could indirectly impact burrowing owl by decreasing habitat value. In addition, development facilitated by the project may result in construction activities which increase soil compaction, which may impede burrow creation. Impacts to burrowing owl would be potentially significant.

If nesting birds are present at individual development sites, or immediate vicinity of individual sites, development facilitated by the plan could result in direct mortality through removal of active nests or disturbance levels that cause nest abandonment. Nesting birds and raptors have the potential to nest on buildings, in shrubs and trees, in rocky outcrops, and on bare ground throughout the City. Vegetation, including street trees, in the City can provide refuge cover from predators, perching sites, and favorable nesting habitat. Direct impacts to nesting birds may occur from disturbance due to increased noise, and human presence could result in nest abandonment or otherwise reduce nesting success due to development facilitated by the plan. Vehicle strikes resulting in injury or mortality may increase with additional vehicles and equipment being operated in the plan area. Development facilitated by the plan may also have indirect impacts to nesting birds, including fugitive dust generated by road grading, which can accumulate on surrounding vegetation and degrade the quality of nesting and foraging habitats for birds, and vegetation trimming, which may temporarily reduce the quantity and quality of habitat by decreasing vegetative cover. Development

facilitated by the plan may result in erosion and sedimentation, fire, hazardous materials, and invasive non-native plants which can also indirectly impact nesting and foraging habitats. Impacts to migration or foraging habitats during construction activities facilitated by the plan may have an indirect effect on birds that rely on these habitats but nest elsewhere.

Future development facilitated by the plan would be required to comply with the requirements of the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code, which include obtaining prior authorization by the USFWS before the take of a protected migratory bird species occurs, subject to USFWS requirements, and prohibiting the take, possession, or destruction of nests or eggs. However, existing City regulations do not mandate procedures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code. Therefore, it is possible development facilitated by the plan could result in disturbance to birds or raptors and potentially violate the MBTA and Sections 3503, 3503.5, and/or 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code. As a result, impacts to nesting birds are potentially significant.

Amphibians

California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, and western spadefoot have moderate potential to occur within the plan area. The plan area contains USFWS designated critical habitat for California tiger salamander (USFWS 2025). California tiger salamanders require access to both aquatic and upland habitat throughout their life cycle. They use standing bodies of fresh water, like ponds, vernal pools and other ephemeral or permanent water bodies for breeding, and require access to upland habitat that contains small animal burrows or underground hideaways for shelter and protection from predators and desiccation during nonbreeding periods (USFWS 2025b). Where suitable habitats are present, development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts from individuals being crushed by project vehicles and equipment, buried by displaced soil, or trapped in excavations as well as direct impacts from the loss or degradation of low-lying areas where pools form during rain events and upland burrowing habitat. If development facilitated by the plan were to occur within wetlands, streams, or upland habitat areas, impacts to California tiger salamander would be potentially significant.

Suitable wash and river habitats for Arroyo toad are present in the plan area, such as along the Santa Maria River. A CDFW designated critical habitat area for California red legged frog exists on the border of the southernmost extents of the Sphere of Influence/General Plan Area. Suitable grasslands and vernal pool habitat for western spadefoot are present in the plan area. Where suitable habitats are present for these species, development facilitated by the plan may result in direct impacts from individuals being crushed by project vehicles and equipment, buried by displaced soil, or trapped in excavations as well as direct impacts from the loss or degradation of low-lying areas where pools form during rain events and upland burrowing habitat. Direct impacts to these species would be potentially significant.

Indirect impacts to special status species which utilize riparian corridors and other aquatic habitat (i.e. southwestern pond turtle, western spadefoot, California tiger salamander, Arroyo toad, California red-legged frog) could result from future development facilitated by the plan if suitable habitats are indirectly impacted by runoff of sediment and hazardous materials from disturbance areas, resulting in degraded water quality, or noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities). Construction activities that would disturb one or more acres of land are subject to the NPDES Construction General Permit. Compliance with the Construction General Permit requires the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) developed by a certified Qualified SWPPP Developer. The SWPPP includes project-specific BMPs to control

erosion, sediment release, and otherwise reduce the potential for discharge of pollutants from construction into stormwater. Typical BMPs include, but are not limited to, installation of silt fences, erosion control blankets, and anti-tracking pads at site exits to prevent off-site transport of soil materials. Section 8-12A.07 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code requires compliance with NPDES permit requirements. Section 8-12A.08 requires any construction activities to implement appropriate BMPs to prevent the discharge of sediment and potential pollutants.

Development facilitated by the plan would also be subject to the provisions of federal and State regulations protecting biological and water resources, including, but not limited to, FESA, CESA, CWA, and the NPPA. These regulations include requirements for biological studies where potential habitat exists, identification of potential jurisdictional waters, and consultation with applicable regulatory agencies where protected biological resources may occur. Compliance with these regulatory requirements would minimize indirect impacts to special status species that utilize aquatic and riparian habitat. Therefore, the plan would result in less than significant indirect impacts to special status species within aquatic or riparian habitat.

Mitigation Measures

BIO-1(a) Biological Resources Screening and Assessment

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City Staff, the City shall require project applicants to engage a qualified biologist (having the appropriate education and experience level) to perform a baseline Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. If it is determined that the project has no potential to impact biological resources, no further action is required. If the project would have the potential to impact biological resources, prior to construction, a qualified biologist shall conduct a project-specific biological analysis to document the existing biological resources within a project footprint plus a minimum buffer of 500 feet around the project footprint, as is feasible, and to determine the potential impacts to those resources. The project-specific biological analysis shall evaluate the potential for impacts to all biological resources including, but not limited to special-status species, nesting birds, wildlife movement, sensitive plant communities, critical habitats, and other resources judged to be sensitive by local, state, and/or federal agencies. If the project would have the potential to impact these resources, the following mitigation measures (Mitigation Measures BIO-1[b] through BIO-1[k]]) shall be incorporated, as applicable, to reduce impacts to a less than significant level. Pending the results of the project-specific biological analysis, design alterations, further technical studies (e.g., protocol surveys) and consultations with the USFWS, CDFW, and/or other local, state, and federal agencies may be required. Note that specific surveys described in the mitigation measures below may be completed as part of the project-specific biological analysis where suitable habitat is present.

BIO-1(b) Special-status Plant Species Surveys

For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that there is potential for significant impacts to federally or state-listed plants or regional population level impacts to species with a CRPR of 1B or 2B from project development, a qualified biologist shall complete surveys for special-status plants prior to any vegetation removal, grubbing, or other construction activity (including

staging and mobilization). The surveys shall be floristic in nature and shall be seasonally timed to coincide with the target species. All plant surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist during the blooming season prior to development permit approval. All special-status plant species identified on site shall be mapped onto a site-specific aerial photograph or topographic map with the use of Global Positioning System unit. Surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the most current protocols established by the CDFW, USFWS, and the local jurisdictions if said protocols exist. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, and the CDFW and/or USFWS, as appropriate, for review and/or approval.

If special-status plants are not found during special-status plant surveys, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2B plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys, the Mitigation Measures BIO-1(c) and BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.

BIO-1(c) Special-status Plant Species Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation

If federally-listed and/or state-listed individuals, and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations are found during special-status plant surveys (pursuant to Mitigation Measure BIO-1[b]) and would be directly impacted by development, then the project shall be re-designed to avoid impacting listed plant species or CRPR 1B or 2 populations, where feasible. Rare and listed plant occurrences that are not within the immediate disturbance footprint but are located within 50 feet of disturbance limits shall have bright orange protective fencing installed at least 30 feet beyond their extent, or other distance as approved by a qualified biologist, to protect them from harm. Prior to initiation of construction activities the project proponent shall submit a site plan depicting the location(s) of special-status plants and avoidance buffers to the City for review and approval.

If special-status plants can be avoided, no further action is required. If federally- and/or state-listed individuals and/or CRPR 1B or 2 plant populations cannot be avoided, then Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) shall be implemented.

BIO-1(d) Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan

If federally- and/or state-listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, or waters of the US and/or State cannot be avoided and will be impacted by development facilitated by the plan, the City shall require mitigation at a minimum ratio of 1:1 per acre of impact (and 1:1 per tree), to be determined in coordination with CDFW and USFWS as and if applicable, for each species as a component of habitat restoration. A habitat mitigation and monitoring plan (HMMP) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the City for review and approval. The HMMP shall include, at a minimum, the following components:

1. Description of the project/impact site (i.e., location, responsible parties, areas to be impacted by habitat type).
2. Goal(s) of the compensatory mitigation project (type[s] and area[s]) of habitat to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved; specific functions and values of habitat type[s] to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved).
3. Description of the proposed compensatory mitigation site (location and size, ownership status, existing functions, and values).
4. Implementation plan for the compensatory mitigation site (rationale for expecting implementation success, responsible parties, schedule, site preparation, planting plan).

5. Maintenance activities during the monitoring period, including weed removal as appropriate (activities, responsible parties, schedule).
6. Monitoring plan for the compensatory mitigation site, including no less than quarterly monitoring for the first year (performance standards, target functions and values, target acreages to be established, restored, enhanced, and/or preserved, annual monitoring reports).
7. Success criteria based on the goals and measurable objectives; said criteria to be, at a minimum, at least 80 percent survival of container plants and 30 percent relative cover by vegetation type or other industry standards as determined by a qualified restoration specialist.
8. An adaptive management program and remedial measures to address any shortcomings in meeting success criteria.
9. Notification of completion of compensatory mitigation and agency confirmation.
10. Contingency measures (initiating procedures, alternative locations for contingency compensatory mitigation, funding mechanism).
11. All nursery plants used in restoration shall be inspected for sudden oak death.

If a federally and/or state-listed plant species has the potential be impacted, an HMMP shall be submitted to the USFWS and/or CDFW for review, and federal and/or state take authorization may be required by these agencies.

Within 30 days of completion of monitoring, a final monitoring report shall be submitted to the City for review and approval, documenting compliance with the HMMP and achievement of success criteria.

BIO-1(e) Endangered/Threatened Special-status Species Habitat Assessments and Protocol Surveys

For development facilitated by the plan where the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determines that suitable habitat may be present for federal- or state-listed, candidate, or proposed species, the City shall require protocol habitat assessments/surveys be completed in accordance with current CDFW and/or USFWS protocols prior to issuance of any construction permits. If, through consultation with the CDFW and/or USFWS, it is determined that protocol habitat assessments/surveys are not required, the project applicant shall be required to complete and document this consultation and submit it to the City prior to issuance of any construction permits. Each protocol has different survey and timing requirements. The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring they understand the protocol requirements and shall hire a qualified biologist to conduct protocol surveys. (Note: if a federally and/or state-listed wildlife species will be impacted, federal and/or state take authorization may be required by USFWS and CDFW.)

BIO-1(f) Endangered/Threatened Animal Species Avoidance and Minimization

For development facilitated by the plan where potential impacts to aquatic and/or terrestrial animal species are identified by the project-specific Biological Resources Screening and Assessment required under Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a), the following measures shall be applied.

1. Ground disturbance shall be limited to the minimum necessary to complete the project. A qualified biologist shall flag the project limits of disturbance. Areas of special biological concern within or adjacent to the limits of disturbance shall have highly visible orange construction fencing installed between said area and the limits of disturbance.

2. All projects occurring within/adjacent to aquatic habitats (including riparian habitats and wetlands) shall be completed between April 1 and October 31, if feasible, to avoid impacts to sensitive aquatic species. Any work outside these dates would require project-specific approval from the City and may be subject to regulatory agency approval.
3. All projects occurring within or adjacent to sensitive habitats that may support federally and/or state-listed endangered/threatened species shall have a CDFW- and/or USFWS-approved biologist present during all initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities. Once initial ground disturbing/vegetation clearing activities have been completed, said biologist shall conduct daily pre-activity clearance surveys for endangered/threatened species. Alternatively, and upon approval of the CDFW and/or USFWS, said biologist may conduct site inspections at a minimum of once per week to ensure all prescribed avoidance and minimization measures are fully implemented.
4. No endangered/threatened species shall be captured and relocated without express permission from the CDFW and/or USFWS.
5. If at any time during project construction an endangered/threatened species enters the construction site or otherwise may be impacted by the project, all project activities shall cease. A CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist shall document the occurrence and consult with the CDFW and USFWS, as appropriate, to determine whether it was safe for project activities to resume.
6. For all work occurring in areas where endangered/threatened species may be present and are at risk of entering the project site during construction, the applicant shall install exclusion fencing along the project boundaries prior to start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The placement of the fence shall be at the discretion of the CDFW/USFWS-approved biologist. This fence shall consist of solid silt fencing placed at a minimum of three feet above grade and two feet below grade and shall be attached to wooden stakes placed at intervals of not more than five feet. The applicant shall inspect the fence weekly and following rain events and high wind events and shall be maintained in good working condition until all construction activities are complete.
7. All vehicle maintenance/fueling/staging shall occur not less than 100 feet from any riparian habitat or water body, including seasonal wetland features. Suitable containment procedures shall be implemented to prevent spills. A minimum of one spill kit shall be available at each work location near riparian habitat or water bodies.
8. No equipment shall be permitted to enter wetted portions of any affected drainage channel or wetland.
9. At the end of each workday, excavations shall be secured with a cover or a ramp provided to prevent wildlife entrapment.
10. All trenches, pipes, culverts, or similar structures shall be inspected for animals prior to burying, capping, moving, or filling.
11. Considering the potential for the project to impact federally and state-listed species and their habitat, the City shall contact CDFW and USFWS to identify mitigation banks within Santa Barbara County during project development. If the results of the project-specific biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]) determine that impacts to federally and state threatened or endangered species habitat are expected, City and/or applicant shall explore species-appropriate mitigation bank(s) servicing the region for purchase of mitigation credits.

12. Prior to grading and construction in natural areas of containing suitable upland habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey as determined necessary during the biological analysis (Mitigation Measure BIO-1[a]). The survey should include a transect survey over the entire project disturbance footprint (including access and staging areas), and mapping of suitable habitat features, such as burrows, that are potentially suitable for listed species. If any listed species are detected, no work shall be conducted until the individual(s) leaves the site of their own accord, unless federal and/or state "take" authorization has been issued for relocation. Typical preconstruction survey procedures, such as burrow scoping and burrow collapse, cannot be conducted without federal and state permits. If any life stage of listed species are found within the survey area, the City and/or applicant shall consult with the USFWS and CDFW to determine the appropriate course of action to comply with the FESA and CESA, if permits are not already in place at the time of construction.

BIO-1(g) Worker Environmental Awareness Program

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels and prior to construction activities (including staging and mobilization), the City shall require the project proponent to arrange Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) training for all construction personnel to attend, conducted by a City-approved biologist, to aid workers in recognizing special-status resources that may occur in the construction area. The specifics of this program shall include identification of the sensitive species and habitats, a description of the regulatory status and general ecological characteristics of sensitive resources, and review of the limits of construction and mitigation measures required to reduce impacts to biological resources within the work area. A fact sheet conveying this information shall also be prepared for distribution to all contractors, their employers, and other personnel involved with construction. All employees shall sign a form provided by the trainer indicating they have attended the WEAP training and understand the information presented to them. The form shall be submitted to the City to document compliance.

BIO-1(h) Northern California Legless Lizard Avoidance and Minimization

For all development facilitated by the plan in undeveloped areas and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, a pre-construction clearance survey for Northern California legless lizard shall be conducted by a City-approved qualified biologist within 48 hours prior to the start of construction (including staging and mobilization). The survey shall cover the entire disturbance footprint within suitable habitats with moist loose soil, plus a minimum 100-foot buffer, where permissible, and should identify all special-status wildlife species observed on the project site. During the pre-construction survey the qualified biologist shall inspect under logs, leaf litter, or other suitable refuge. If Northern California legless lizards are identified, individuals shall be relocated by a qualified biologist to suitable cover with loose soils a minimum of 500 feet from the project site, as accessible. A report of the survey results shall be submitted to the City, for review and approval.

BIO-1(i) Roosting Bat Surveys and Avoidance Prior to Removal

For all development facilitated by the plan that will require the removal of large trees (greater than 20 inches in diameter at five feet from the ground), abandoned buildings, bridges, or other suitable roosting structure identified during a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment prior to tree and/or structure removal, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey of all trees and structures to be removed or impacted by construction activities to determine whether active roosts of special-status bats are present on site. Tree or structure removal shall be planned for either the

spring or the fall, and timed to ensure both suitable conditions for the detection of bats and adequate time for tree and/or structure removal to occur during seasonal periods of bat activity exclusive of the breeding season, as described below. Trees and/or structures containing suitable potential bat roost habitat features shall be clearly marked or identified. If no bat roosts are found, the results of the survey will be documented and submitted to the City within 30 days of the survey, after which no further action will be required.

If roosts are present, the biologist shall prepare a site-specific roosting bat protection plan to be implemented by the contractor following the City's approval. Additionally, the qualified biologist shall determine compensatory mitigation for temporary or permanent habitat loss due to tree removal, in conjunction with CDFW. The plan shall incorporate the following guidance as appropriate:

- When possible, removal of trees/structures identified as suitable roosting habitat shall be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, including the following:
  - Between September 1 and about October 15, or before evening temperatures fall below 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs.
  - Between March 1 and April 15, or after evening temperatures rise above 45 degrees Fahrenheit and/or no more than 0.5 inch of rainfall within 24 hours occurs.
- If a tree/structure must be removed during the breeding season and is identified as potentially containing a colonial maternity roost, then a qualified biologist shall conduct acoustic emergence surveys or implement other appropriate methods to further evaluate if the roost is an active maternity roost. Under the biologist's guidance, the contractor shall implement measures similar to or exceeding the following:
  - If it is determined that the roost is not an active maternity roost, then the roost may be removed in accordance with the other requirements of this measure.
  - If it is found that an active maternity roost of a colonial roosting species is present, the roost shall not be disturbed during the breeding season (April 15 to August 31).
- Tree removal procedures shall be implemented using a two-step tree removal process. This method is conducted over two consecutive days and works by creating noise and vibration by cutting non-habitat branches and limbs from habitat trees using chainsaws only (no excavators or other heavy machinery) on day one. The noise and vibration disturbance, together with the visible alteration of the tree, is very effective in causing bats that emerge nightly to feed to not return to the roost that night. The remainder of the tree is removed on day two.
- Prior to the demolition of vacant structures within the project site, a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused habitat assessment of all structures to be demolished. The habitat assessment shall be conducted enough in advance to ensure the commencement of building demolition can be scheduled during seasonal periods of bat activity (see above), if required. If no signs of day roosting activity are observed, no further actions will be required. If bats or signs of day roosting by bats are observed, a qualified biologist will prepare specific recommendations such as partial dismantling to cause bats to abandon the roost, or humane eviction, both to be conducted during seasonal periods of bat activity, if required.
- If the qualified biologist determines a roost is used by a large number of bats (large hibernaculum), bat boxes shall be installed near the project site. The number of bat boxes installed will depend on the size of the hibernaculum and shall be determined through consultation with CDFW. If a maternity colony has become established, all construction

activities shall be postponed within a 500-foot buffer around the maternity colony until it is determined by a qualified biologist that the young have dispersed. Once it has been determined that the roost is clear of bats, the roost shall be removed immediately.

BIO-1(j) Monarch Butterfly Avoidance and Minimization

For development facilitated by the plan within undeveloped parcels, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, the City shall require that all construction activities (including equipment staging, grading, and construction) shall be avoided during the monarch butterfly overwintering season between October 15 through March 15, if practicable. In the event construction activities cannot be avoided during the overwintering season, the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a survey for roosting monarch butterflies within seven days prior to initiation of construction activities to determine their presence/absence.

If no monarch butterflies are observed during pre-construction surveys, no further actions are necessary. In the event construction pauses for a period of 7 days or more, if construction is planned to restart during the monarch butterfly overwintering season (October 15 through March 15), the City shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a new survey in accordance with the requirements of this mitigation measure.

If construction activities occur during the overwintering season and monarch butterflies are present, the qualified biologist shall establish a protective buffer, ranging from 100 to 300 feet from the roosting site in which monarch butterflies are aggregating. The buffer shall be delineated on site by the biologist with flagging or staking visible by construction personnel. The construction contractor shall ensure no construction occurs within the protective buffer, including staging of equipment or stopping or idling in the buffer, during the overwintering season. In the event construction activities, or other use of equipment, is needed to work within the buffer, the qualified biologist shall be present on site to monitor construction activities and determine if the work is disturbing the aggregated butterflies. If the biologist determines the work is disturbing the butterflies, the biologist shall have the authority to stop work within the protective buffer at any time. In addition, due to the regular movement of the butterflies and locations of the aggregations, the biologist shall have the discretion to adjust the protective buffers, as necessary.

BIO-1(k) Pre- Construction Bird Surveys, Avoidance, and Notification

For all development facilitated by the plan, prior to construction activities and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, construction activities initiated during the bird nesting season (February 1 – September 15), involving removal of vegetation (e.g. trees and shrubs), abandoned structures, or other nesting bird habitat, a pre-construction nesting bird survey shall be conducted no more than 5 days prior to initiation of ground disturbance and vegetation removal. The nesting bird pre-construction survey shall be conducted on foot and shall include a buffer around the construction site at a distance determined by a qualified biologist, including staging and storage areas. The minimum survey radii surrounding the work area shall be the following: 250 feet for non-raptors and 1,000 feet for raptors. The survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist familiar with the identification of avian species known to occur in the Santa Maria region. If construction lapses for seven days or longer, the qualified biologist shall conduct another focused survey before project activities are reinitiated. If nests are found, an avoidance buffer shall be determined by the biologist dependent upon the species, the proposed work activity, and existing disturbances associated with land uses outside of the site. The qualified biologist shall observe the active nest to establish a behavioral baseline of the adults and nestlings, if present. The

qualified biologist shall continuously monitor the active nests to detect signs of disturbance and behavioral change as a result of construction impacts, such as noise, vibration, odors, or worker/equipment motion. If signs of disturbance and behavioral changes are observed, the qualified biologist shall cease work causing those changes and may contact CDFW or USFWS for guidance. The buffer shall be demarcated by the biologist with bright orange construction fencing, flagging, construction lathe, or other means to demarcate the boundary. All construction personnel shall be notified of the buffer zone as an "Ecologically Sensitive Area" and to avoid entering the buffer zone during the nesting season. No ground disturbing activities shall occur within the buffer until the biologist has confirmed that breeding/nesting is completed and the young have fledged the nest. Encroachment into the buffer shall occur only at the discretion of the qualified biologist on the basis that the encroachment will not be detrimental to an active nest. A report summarizing the pre-construction survey(s) shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and shall be submitted to the City prior to the commencement of construction activities.

Project site plans shall include a statement acknowledging compliance with the federal MBTA and California Fish and Game Code that includes avoidance of active bird nests and identification of Best Management Practices to avoid impacts to active nests, including checking for nests prior to construction activities during February 1 to September 15, and what to do if an active nest is found so that the nest is not inadvertently impacted during grading or construction activities.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plant and animal species by requiring a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels, and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(b) and BIO-1(c) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plant species to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys and avoidance and minimization measures for special-status plant species. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) would reduce potential impacts to listed plants, non-listed special-status plant populations, sensitive natural communities, and waters to a less than significant level by requiring the preparation of, and adherence to, an HMMP if special-status species or habitat are present. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(e) and BIO-1(f) would reduce impacts to endangered and threatened special-status species by requiring habitat assessments, protocol surveys, and avoidance and minimization measures for these species. Implementation of Mitigation measures BIO-1(g) would reduce potential impacts to special-status plants and wildlife during construction facilitated by the plan by facilitating a Worker's Environmental Awareness Program. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(h) would reduce potential impacts to Northern California legless lizard to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys and avoidance measures if Northern California legless lizard are present on a project site. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-(i) would reduce potential impacts to bat species to a less than significant level by requiring assessment and preconstruction surveys of potential building and tree removals, and avoidance of roosting bats. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(j) would reduce potential impacts to monarch butterfly to a less than significant level by requiring assessment of potential tree removals and avoidance of overwintering monarchs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(k) would reduce potential impacts to nesting birds to a less than significant level by requiring preconstruction surveys for nesting birds and avoidance measures if nesting birds are present on a project site.

Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k).

Threshold 2:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?
Threshold 3:	Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

Impact BIO-2 WETLANDS WITHIN THE PLAN AREA MAY BE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE. DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO ADOPTED CITY REGULATIONS TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO RIPARIAN HABITAT, SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES, AND WETLANDS. COMPLIANCE WITH THE NPDES CONSTRUCTION GENERAL PERMIT, SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE, PROPOSED POLICIES IN THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, AND MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-1(A) AND BIO-1(D) WOULD ENSURE POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO RIPARIAN HABITAT, SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES, AND WETLANDS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.

The CNDDB identifies southern vernal pool as a sensitive natural community which could occur in the plan area. According to the USFWS NWI, wetlands in and surrounding the City consist of estuarine and marine habitats, freshwater ponds, freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested and shrub wetlands, and riverine habitats (USFWS 2025c). Development facilitated by the plan is not likely to result in the removal of large areas of riparian, wetland, or other sensitive natural community habitat, as development would generally occur in areas of the City that are developed and surrounded by existing development. However, as shown in Figure 4.3-2, there are wetlands identified within the Annexation Area and throughout the plan area where development facilitated by the plan may occur which may be significantly degraded, or removed, by development projects. Development facilitated by the plan would be subject to Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), and 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention) and NPDES permit requirements to protect water quality prior to, during, and post-construction.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies that would protect sensitive, riparian, creek, and wetland habitats:

> **Policy COS-1.1: Natural habitat and wildlife corridors.** Protect and, to the extent feasible, expand natural habitat and wildlife corridor areas, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and sphere of influence.
>
> **Policy COS-1.3: Natural biodiversity.** Increase natural biodiversity through the reintroduction of native species, removal of non-native, invasive species, and proper sustainable maintenance of vegetated areas.
>
> **Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species.** Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or State endangered and threatened species and non-listed special status species through the development and permit review process. Condition development projects to avoid impacts to these species, to the greatest extent feasible.
>
> **Policy COS-4.1: Santa Maria River protection.** Protect and enhance the beneficial uses of the Santa Maria River to support essential community and environmental needs, including municipal and domestic water supply, agricultural supply, and groundwater recharge.

Policy COS-4.3: Groundwater contamination. Minimize groundwater contamination from current and previous oil and gas operations.

Policy PFS-2.3: Groundwater. Improve the long-term recharge of the Santa Maria Valley Groundwater Basin by retaining natural watershed areas, developing regional recharge basins, and minimizing impervious surfaces in new development.

~~**Policy PFS-2.6: Contaminant mitigation.** Manage contaminated sites to protect natural systems from groundwater infiltration and stormwater runoff.~~

Policy S-3.2: Agricultural runoff reduction. Work with the County of Santa Barbara to reduce off-site and urban flooding caused by agricultural runoff.

Implementation of proposed policies in the plan would ensure sensitive habitats are identified prior to project-specific siting and habitat areas are protected where applicable, and development facilitated by the plan would be subject to applicable federal, State, and City requirements, which would minimize potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. However, unmitigated impacts to riparian and other sensitive natural communities resulting from development facilitated by the plan would still be potentially significant, requiring Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) to reduce potential impacts.

Mitigation Measure

Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) (listed above) are required to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Significance After Mitigation

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(a) would reduce potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands by requiring a Biological Resources Screening and Assessment to determine whether projects proposed within undeveloped parcels, and if determined necessary based on preliminary review conducted by City staff, have any potential to impact special-status biological resources, inclusive of special-status plants and animals, sensitive vegetation communities (including vernal pools and other wetlands), and critical habitat. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1(d) would reduce potential impacts to sensitive natural communities and waters to a less than significant level by requiring the preparation of, and adherence to, an HMMP if special-status species or habitat are present. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) and adherence to federal, State, and City requirements and proposed plan policies COS-1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 4.1, and 4.3, PFS-2.3 and 2.6, and S-3.2.

Threshold 4:	Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Impact BIO-3 DUE TO THE EXISTING LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT, THERE ARE NO ESSENTIAL WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY AREAS WITHIN THE PLAN AREA. WITH ADHERENCE TO THE PROPOSED POLICIES OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD HAVE A LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE MOVEMENT OF NATIVE RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY FISH OR WILDLIFE SPECIES WITHIN THE PLAN AREA, OR ON ESTABLISHED NATIVE RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY WILDLIFE CORRIDORS.

Due to the existing level of development, the plan area is not within an essential connectivity area as defined by CDFW (CDFW 2025b). Development facilitated by the plan would generally occur in areas that are developed or surrounded by existing development and urban disturbance, and no development is anticipated or planned within the Santa Maria River. As a result, development facilitated by the plan would not result in potentially significant impacts to wildlife movement because they would not obstruct wildlife corridors or fragment habitat such that wildlife movement is restricted.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies, which would minimize impacts from any future development on sensitive habitat that could provide opportunities for wildlife movement:

> **Policy COS-1.1: Natural habitat and wildlife corridors.** Protect and, to the extent feasible, expand natural habitat and wildlife corridor areas, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and sphere of influence.
>
> **Policy COS-1.2: City greenbelt.** Coordinate with Santa Barbara County to develop a continuous system of greenbelts and natural corridors.
>
> **Policy COS-1.3: Natural biodiversity.** Increase natural biodiversity through the reintroduction of native species, removal of non-native, invasive species, and proper sustainable maintenance of vegetated areas.
>
> **Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species.** Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or State endangered and threatened species and non-listed special status species through the development and permit review process. Condition development projects to avoid impacts to these species, to the greatest extent feasible.

With implementation of the proposed policies in the 2045 General Plan Update, as well as compliance with the Santa Maria Municipal Code Chapters 8-12A (Stormwater Runoff Pollution Prevention), and 9-68 (Flood Damage Prevention), development facilitated by the plan would have a less than significant impact on the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or on established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 5:	Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Impact BIO-4 DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO THE PROPOSED POLICIES OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND SANTA MARIA MUNICIPAL CODE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO PROTECTION OF TREES AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. THEREFORE, THIS IMPACT WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

Potential impacts to trees and other biological resources, such as those resulting from tree and vegetation removal, may result from development facilitated by the plan. The plan area has trees within its developed and disturbed areas, as well as its surrounding parks and open space. Chapter 8-8 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code outlines permit requirements for tree maintenance and removal. Chapter 12-44 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code implements provides regulations governing trees in the City and codifies the protection of existing trees unless otherwise approved by City Parks Division as part of a development plan. Section 8-8.07 protects publicly owned trees from damage or injury. Section 8-8.08 and 8-8.09 provide requirements for vegetation protection plans and replacement for existing publicly owned trees and vegetation during construction projects. Pursuant to Section 8-8.10 and 8-8.14, any publicly owned or maintained tree damaged or removed is required to be replaced at a 2:1 ratio at a minimum size of a 24-inch box of a comparable size and species, unless specifically approved by the City Parks Division in accordance with the tree planting requirements outlined in Section 8-8.15. Additionally, Chapter 12-44 provides tree replacement requirements dependent on the size of the tree removed. Section 8-8.19 also protects historic and heritage trees from damage or removal.

The 2045 General Plan Update includes the following proposed policies that would protect biological resources and preserve trees and the urban forest:

Policy COS-1.1: Natural habitat and wildlife corridors. Protect and, to the extent feasible, expand natural habitat and wildlife corridor areas, natural wetlands, and other natural lands throughout the city and sphere of influence.

Policy COS-1.2: City greenbelt. Coordinate with Santa Barbara County to develop a continuous system of greenbelts and natural corridors.

Policy COS-1.3: Natural biodiversity. Increase natural biodiversity through the reintroduction of native species, removal of non-native, invasive species, and proper sustainable maintenance of vegetated areas.

Policy COS-1.4: Urban rewilding. Implement urban rewilding projects to reintroduce natural processes, restore natural ecosystems, and promote biodiversity.

Policy COS-1.5: Endangered, threatened, and special status species. Minimize potential impacts of development on federal or State endangered and threatened species and non-listed special status species through the development and permit review process. Condition development projects to avoid impacts to these species, to the greatest extent feasible.

Policy COS-3.1: Urban forestry regulations. ~~I~~ Adopt and implement the Urban Forest Management Plan with the goal of expanding the urban canopy to 20 percent of the city by improving tree maintenance and planting standards in the City's Municipal Code.

~~**Policy COS-3.2: City canopy cover.** Facilitate new tree plantings per the City's Urban Forest Management Plan, with a specific focus on disadvantaged communities.~~

Development facilitated by the plan would adhere to the requirements of the Santa Maria Municipal Code and the proposed policies of the 2045 General Plan. Therefore, impacts related to conflict with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources, including a tree preservation policy or ordinance, would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required because impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 6:	Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan**?**

Impact BIO-5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2045 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISION OF AN ADOPTED HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN, NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN, OR OTHER APPROVED LOCAL, REGIONAL, OR STATE HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN. NO IMPACT WOULD OCCUR.

There are no habitat conservation plans, natural community conservation plans, or other approved local regional or state habitat conservation plans in the plan area. Therefore, development and improvements in the plan area would not conflict with such plans. No impact would occur.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required because there would be no impact.

4.3.4 Cumulative Impacts

A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15065[a][3]). A project's environmental impacts are "cumulatively considerable" if the "incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects" (CEQA Guidelines Section 15065[a][3]). Regional cumulative impacts consider the City-wide impacts together with similar impacts of reasonably anticipated regional projects/programs. The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this EIR, as well as the determination of the cumulative impact analysis area, is discussed in Section 3, Environmental Setting, Subsection 3.3, Cumulative Development.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City limits and annexation areas. Cumulative development has the potential to result in adverse effects to special-status species. Cumulative development could directly impact candidate, sensitive, or special-status species injury or death as a result of individuals being crushed or buried by construction vehicles, additional vehicles brought to an area by development, equipment, or displaced soil; entrapment of individuals in excavation areas, disturbance of individuals by construction-related noise and vibration (resulting from grading or other construction activities); impacts to vegetation used for food and shelter, reduction of refugia habitats, and accidental destruction of active burrows and nests by construction vehicles or equipment. Cumulative development could also result in permanent loss of suitable habitat. Potential indirect impacts resulting from development facilitated by the plan include the

introduction or spread of invasive plant species, fugitive dust, standing water or food waste, and soil compaction that hinders burrowing. Additionally, cumulative development could indirectly impact candidate, sensitive, or special-status species, including critical habitat essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, through habitat degradation or removal. As a result, cumulative impacts are potentially significant.

The plan would not facilitate substantial permanent development in riparian habitat and would implement policies designed to preserve and restore habitat for special-status species. These include Policy COS-1.1 and Policy COS-1.5 which emphasize the protection of wildlife habitat. Furthermore, Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) through BIO-1(k) would ensure development facilitated by the plan would minimize potential impacts to special status plant and wildlife species and nesting birds. Therefore, the plan would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on candidate, sensitive, or special-status species.

Cumulative development could indirectly impact natural water resources due to offsite polluted runoff or sedimentation. Cumulative development proposed in areas identified as jurisdictional waters and/or wetlands, streambed/banks, or riparian vegetation would be subject to the permit requirements of the USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW, pursuant to Section 404 and Section 401 of the CWA, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code. Applicable federal and State requirements would minimize potential indirect impacts to riparian habitat and wetlands to a less than significant level. However, direct impacts to streams, wetlands, and riparian vegetation resulting from degradation or removal of habitat would be potentially significant.

The plan would not facilitate substantial permanent development in wetland, stream, or riparian habitat and would implement policies designed to preserve and restore wetland and aquatic habitats. These include, but are not limited to, Policy COS-1.1 and Policy COS-4.1 which emphasize the protection of the Santa Maria River and other wildlife habitat. Furthermore, Mitigation Measures BIO-1(a) and BIO-1(d) would ensure development facilitated by the plan minimizes potential impacts to riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, and wetlands. Therefore, the plan would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on riparian habitat, sensitive natural communities, or wetlands.

Due to the existing level of development, the cumulative development area is not located within a CDFW-designated essential wildlife connectivity area. The plan includes Policy COS-1.1 and COS-1.2 which seek to protect and enhance remaining natural habitat and wildlife corridors within the City. Therefore, cumulative development would have less than significant impacts on wildlife corridors.

Cumulative development would be required to adhere to applicable local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources enforced by the agencies that have jurisdiction over a project site. There is no Natural Community Conservation Plan or Habitat Conservation Plan within the proposed plan area; therefore, no cumulative impacts related to conflicts local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources or a Natural Community Conservation Plan or Habitat Conservation Plan would occur.