

County of Santa Clara

Department of Planning and Development
Planning Office

County Government Center, East Wing, 7th Floor
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110-1705
(408) 299-5770 FAX (408) 288-9198
www.sccplanning.org



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE SARGENT QUARRY PROJECT

Project Applicant: Verne Freeman, Sargent Ranch Management Company

File Number: 10747-15P

Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 810-38-014, -016, and -017

As the Lead Agency, the County of Santa Clara will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Sargent Quarry Project. A brief description of the proposed project (including figures) and a summary of the potential environmental effects are attached. The project proposes operation of a sand and gravel mining operation and construction and operation of aggregate processing facilities on an approximately 320-acre area four miles south of the City of Gilroy, California. The project requires adoption of a Reclamation Plan and issuance of a Conditional Use Permit for the 30-year operational term of the quarry.

A Public Scoping/Community Meeting to solicit comments for the Notice of Preparation will be held at the Gilroy Library located at 350 West 6th Street, in Gilroy, California, on **Wednesday, August 10, 2016, from 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.** In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), comments on the Notice of Preparation are due within 30 days of receipt of this notice. Please address your comments to:

County of Santa Clara
Planning Office
Attention: David Rader
County Government Center
70 West Hedding Street, 7th Floor, East Wing
San Jose CA 95110
david.rader@pln.sccgov.org

Prepared by:
David Rader, Senior Planner

Approved by:
Rob Eastwood, Planning Manager, AICP

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Introduction

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project that an agency may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to provide information sufficient to (a) evaluate a proposed project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment, (b) to examine methods of reducing adverse impacts; and (c) to consider alternatives to the project.

The EIR for the proposed project will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the EIR for the Sargent Quarry Project will include the following:

- A summary of the project;
- A project description;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and proposed mitigation measures;
- A cumulative impact discussion;
- Alternatives to the proposed project; and
- CEQA required environmental consequences, including (a) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources; (c) the growth inducing impacts of the proposed project; and (d) effects found not to be significant.

Project Location

The project site is located approximately four miles south of the City of Gilroy, California, west of Highway 101 in Santa Clara County. The project area is accessed via Old Monterey Road. The project location is shown on attached Figure 1: Regional Map, Figure 2: Vicinity Map, and Figure 3: Aerial Photograph. Project activities would occur within Assessor's Parcel Numbers 810-38-014, -016, and -017, as shown in attached Figure 2.

Project Description

Overview

The project proposes a sand and gravel mining operation, as well as construction and operation of aggregate processing facilities, on approximately 320 acres of the approximately 6,400-acre Sargent Ranch property. Aggregates are materials (such as sand, gravel, and crushed rock) that, along with water and Portland cement, are an essential ingredient in concrete. The approximately 320-acre area where mining activities would occur is currently used for cattle grazing. The remaining approximately 6,083 acres of the Sargent Ranch would be maintained in their current conditions and would not be utilized for mining, processing, or reclamation activities. The project requires Santa Clara County approval of a Reclamation Plan and issuance of a Conditional Use Permit for the 30-year operational term of the quarry.

Alluvial sand and gravel deposits (consisting of conglomerate, sandstone, and siltstones) would be mined, processed, and sold to companies for use at construction sites in the region. These deposits exist on hills at Sargent Ranch as a result of geologic plate-tectonic actions between the North American Plate and the Pacific Plate, as well as the San Andreas Fault and the Sargent Fault. These alluvial sand and gravel deposits have been uplifted up from their original location along historic riverbeds at the valley floor to a height of approximately 600 feet above sea level. Sand and gravel deposits would be mined in an open-pit fashion to an approximate depth 200 feet above sea level as part of the project. No underground mining would occur; rather, hillslopes within mining areas would be cutback with the quarry floor no deeper than the base of the hillslopes. The open-pit mining area would include sidewalls and benches to provide for the stability of the quarry slopes.

It is estimated that approximately 38,700,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel (as well as the overburden, or material overlying the sand and gravel deposits) would be mined over the 30-year permit term of the quarry. Mined sand and gravel aggregate deposits would be sold locally for a variety of construction-related uses. Overburden and/or unsaleable material as concrete-grade aggregate would be stockpiled and sold as engineered fill or used in the final reclamation of quarry slopes at the conclusion of each mining phase, which is described further below.

Mining Phases 1 and 2

Sand and gravel would be extracted year-round from within an approximately 238-acre mining area in four phases during the 30-year term of the Conditional Use Permit. Phase 1 and Phase 2 mining areas are located on two hilltops on either side of Sargent Creek at the southeast portion of Sargent Ranch, as shown in Figure 4: Site Plan. Materials would be excavated from west to east using mobile equipment (e.g. scrapers, bulldozers, and excavators) and loaded onto haul trucks. To transport mined material from the Phase 1 and Phase 2 mining areas, an approximately 1.6-mile-long, elevated conveyor belt would be constructed. The base of the conveyor would be elevated about four feet above grade. The conveyor belt would move the aggregate from the mining area to a 14-acre processing area in the northeastern portion of the site. An 11-foot-wide access road would be constructed alongside the eight-foot-wide conveyor belt structure for access and conveyor belt maintenance purposes. Mining in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas is anticipated to occur for 10 to 15 years with roughly 8,600,000 cubic yards of material excavated.

An approximately 50-foot-tall visual screening berm would be constructed along the east side of the processing area (adjacent to Highway 101) utilizing overburden mined as part of Phase 1 and Phase 2 as shown in Figure 4. Trees and vegetation would be planted on the berm screen views of the processing plant and future mining operations associated with Phase 3 and 4 of the project, described below. Topsoil would be stockpiled separately for use in future reclamation and revegetation activities once mining operations at Phase 1 and Phase 2 have ceased.

Mining Phases 3 and 4

Mining operations at Phase 3 and Phase 4 would begin approximately 15 years into the 30-year term of the Conditional Use Permit, with Phase 4 occurring after mining activities are completed for Phase 3. Because these two mining areas are potentially visible to drivers on Highway 101, operations would occur in back of the previously described vegetated berm

constructed at part of Phase 1 and 2 activities, as shown in Figure 4. The Phase 3 and Phase 4 hillsides would be mined from west to east using mobile equipment and material would be hauled in trucks to the on-site processing plant. An unpaved approximately 20-foot-wide roadway would provide access from Phases 3 and 4 to the processing plant. Mining in the Phase 3 and Phase 4 areas is anticipated to occur for 10 to 15 years with roughly 30,100,000 cubic yards of material excavated.

Overburden and topsoil from Phase 3 will be stored separately in stockpile areas north of the mining pit, which would be contoured and revegetated to provide stability and control erosion. Because work associated with Phase 4 won't begin until after Phase 3 mining activities have ceased, Phase 4 overburden would be placed in the Phase 3 area and would also be placed onto the northern, eastern, and western temporary slope of the Phase 4 mining area to create a permanent slope of 3:1 (horizontal: vertical), which would be maintained upon termination of mining activities.

Processing Plant

Excavated sand and gravel would be hauled via the conveyor belt (for Phases 1 and 2) or trucks (for Phases 3 and 4) to the approximately 14-acre processing plant. Material would be sized, washed, crushed, and sorted mechanically utilizing a hopper, crusher, and radial stacker. Groundwater would be pumped from a new on-site well to control dust created as part of processing plant operations. This area would also contain a process water pond, which would be used to retain water for reuse in aggregate processing. Additionally, a stormwater sediment basin would catch surface runoff from areas disturbed by processing operations via drainage ditches and swales to catch sediment and allow the stormwater to infiltrate into the ground. Employee parking, offices, maintenance building, truck scales, and loading areas would be provided as part of the processing plant. An approximately 500-foot-long existing dirt road would be improved and paved to provide access to the project site.

Operations

The Sargent Quarry would employ up to 15 on-site employees at any one time. Mining operations are proposed to occur year round at the site Monday through Saturday between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Occasional Sunday and holiday work would occur as part of special projects. Maintenance of equipment would be conducted on any day of the week. The level of activity at the quarry would be highest during the construction season between April and October, and lowest during the rainy season. Mining would be conducted using bulldozers, excavators, graders, and front end loaders. No blasting is proposed.

Access

Access to the project site would occur via southbound Highway 101 and Old Monterey Road through a gated entrance. Trucks leaving the site traveling to destinations south of the quarry would continue along Old Monterey Road and then onto southbound Highway 101 via the stacking lane already in place. Trucks traveling to destinations north of the quarry would use the Sargent Ranch undercrossing of Highway 101 (which would be improved and paved) onto northbound Highway 101 via a new acceleration lane to be installed as part of the project.

Reclamation

Reclamation of the quarry and material processing area would be undertaken when mining at each phase is complete. Reclamation would include utilization of overburden and topsoil to fill quarry pits to elevations at or below surrounding grades, recontouring of the land surface of mined and processing areas, installation of erosion and stormwater control features, and revegetation. The site topography would ultimately be contoured to create a safe condition for cattle grazing (which is intended to be resumed at the site upon termination of mining and completion of reclamation activities) with a maximum slope of 3:1, similar to other slopes at Sargent Ranch. Access roads would be removed and revegetated once reclamation of mining areas is complete.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project

The EIR will identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from implementation of the proposed project. Specific environmental topics addressed will include:

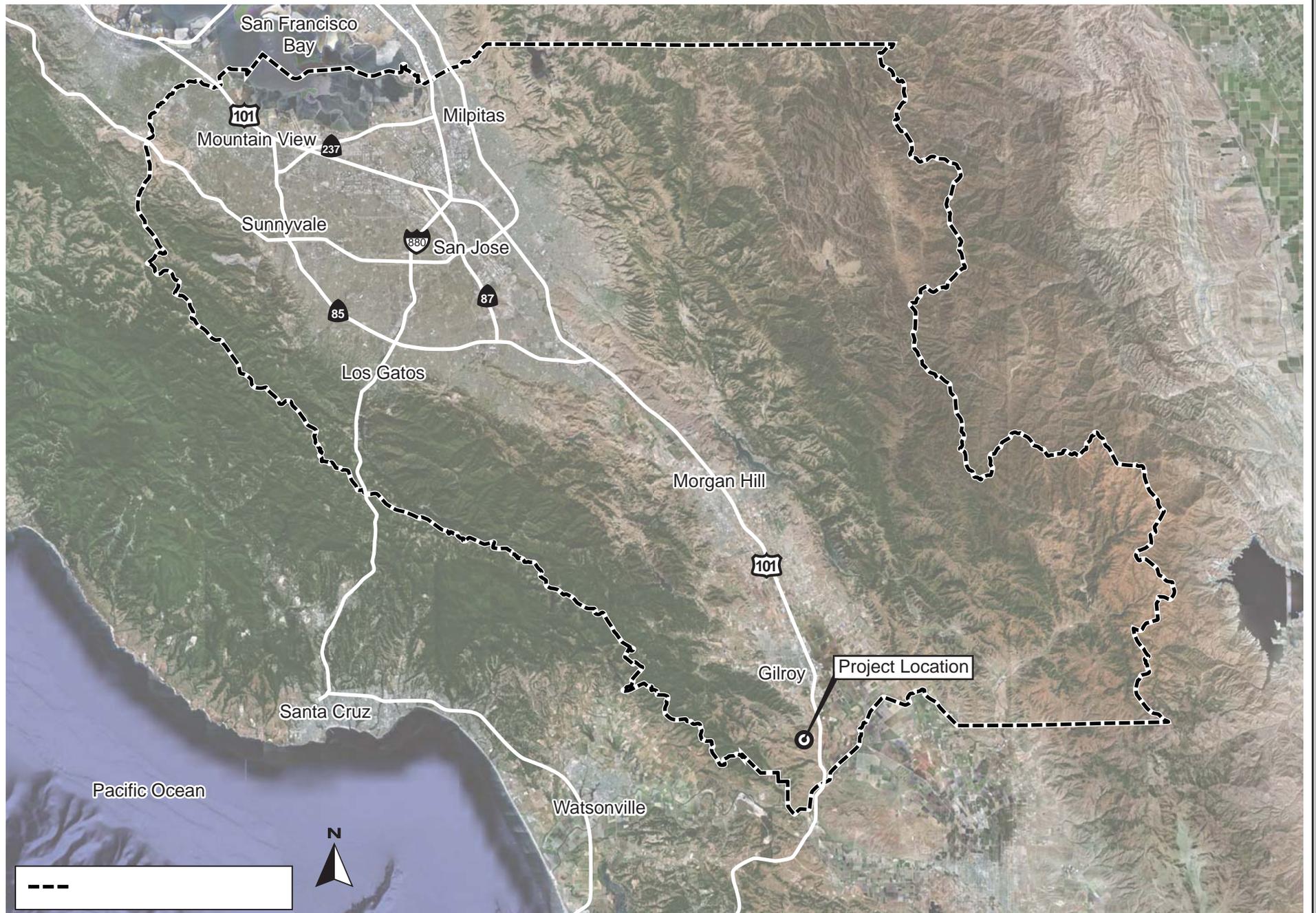
- **Aesthetics** – The project site is located in southern Santa Clara County, which is recognized in the County’s General Plan as a scenic gateway to the South County. The EIR will describe the existing visual character of the project site and the anticipated change in visual character resulting from development of the proposed quarry. Environmental effects of proposed lighting will be addressed. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant aesthetic impacts, as appropriate.
- **Air Quality** – The EIR will address regional air quality conditions and impacts to regional air quality from construction activities, indirect sources (e.g., project traffic generation), and operational emissions from on-site quarry equipment. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant air quality impacts, as appropriate.
- **Biological Resources** – The Draft EIR will address a range of biological resource issues associated with the project, including impacts to habitats, special-status species, wetlands, and jurisdictional waters. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid impacts to biological resources, as appropriate.
- **Cultural and Paleontological Resources** – The EIR will discuss the potential for cultural resources to be located in the project area, including prehistoric, historic, and Native American resources. Paleontological resources will also be addressed. Mitigation measures to reduce or avoid impacts to buried cultural resources and paleontological resources will be identified as appropriate.
- **Energy** – The EIR will examine the potential for the project to result in excessive or inefficient use of energy and will discuss the energy conservation measures included in the project. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant energy impacts, as appropriate.
- **Geology and Soils** – The existing geologic, soil conditions, and seismicity at the project site will be described in the EIR. The EIR will evaluate potential project impacts related to

seismicity, slope stability and erosion within the quarry area. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant geologic and seismic impacts, as appropriate.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions** – The EIR will describe the regulatory context surrounding the issue of global climate change and will evaluate the project’s greenhouse gas emissions and contribution to global climate change. The EIR will evaluate the project’s greenhouse gas emissions, in conformance with the methodology of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce significant greenhouse gas emissions impacts, as appropriate.
- **Hazardous Materials and Hazards** – The EIR will evaluate existing and past hazardous materials use on the site and the potential for the project to result in public health and safety or hazardous materials impacts. Requirements for reduction of wildfire hazards and mosquito abatement will be addressed based in part on County Surface Mining and Land Reclamation Standards and requirements. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant hazardous materials impacts, as appropriate.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality** – The EIR will describe the existing hydrologic and drainage conditions at the project site, as well as changes in site drainage and hydrological conditions resulting from the proposed development. Compliance with stormwater management plans will be reviewed. The EIR will also include a discussion of groundwater hydrology and impacts to groundwater for each mining phase. Consumptive use of groundwater for dust control, washing, and exported in the finished product will be discussed and impacts will be evaluated, as will the need for dewatering. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant hydrology and water quality impacts, as appropriate.
- **Land Use and Planning** – The EIR will describe the existing land uses on and adjacent to the project site, and the project site’s existing General Plan land use and zoning designations. The EIR will describe the proposed quarry and its relationship to existing development in the area, and will identify potential issues between the project and existing land uses. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant land use impacts, as appropriate.
- **Noise** – The EIR will describe the existing noise condition in the project area and evaluate the potential for project-generated noise and vibration to impact sensitive receptors in the project area. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant noise impacts, as appropriate.
- **Public Services** – The EIR will discuss the availability of public facilities and service systems (including police and fire services, parks and recreational facilities, schools, and libraries) in the project area, and the potential for the project to require the construction of new or expanded facilities. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant impacts to public services, as appropriate.
- **Transportation** – The EIR will describe the existing roadway network and transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities in the project area. Effects of project traffic on key intersections,

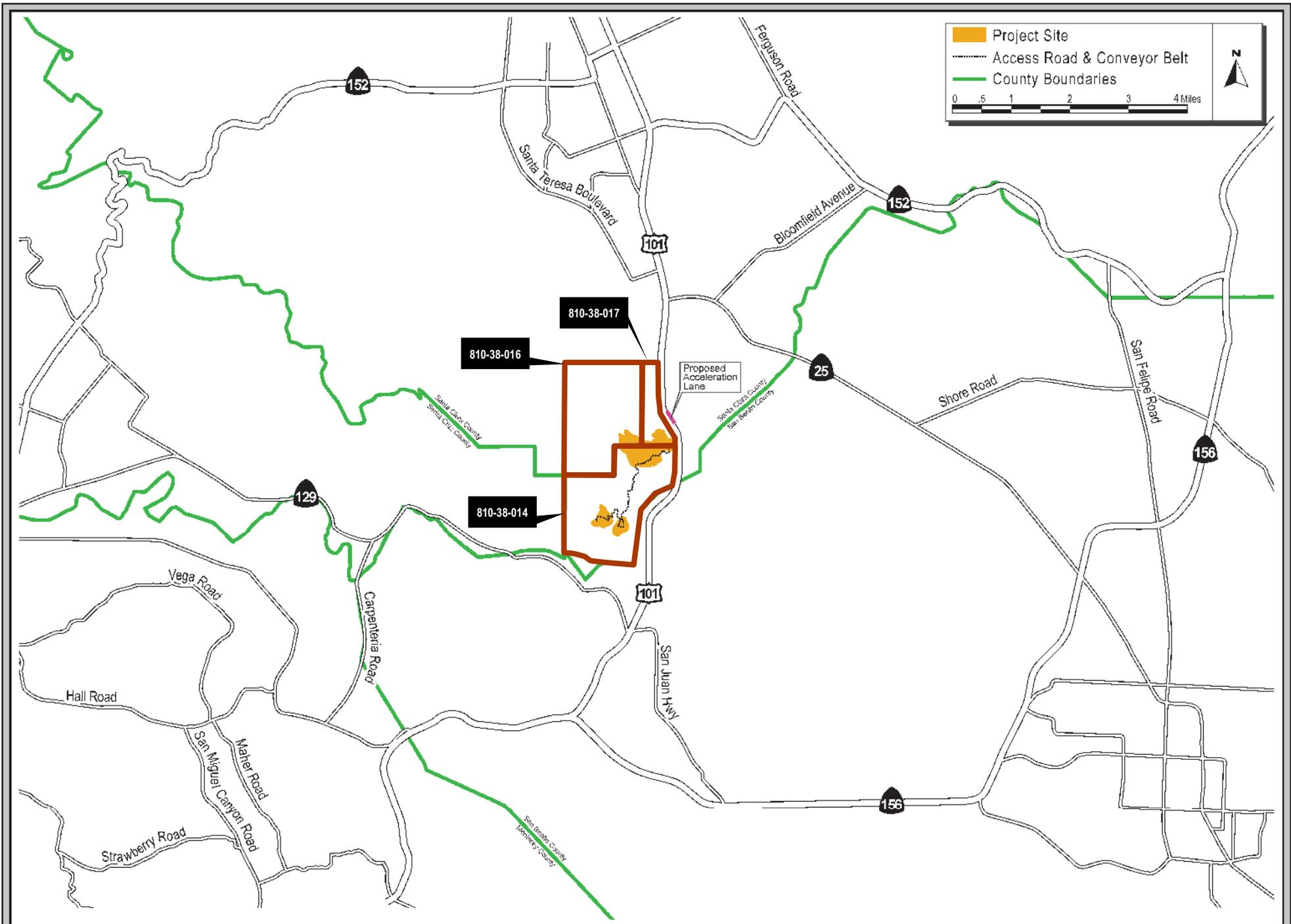
roadways, and freeway facilities providing access to the project area will be evaluated, as will roadway geometrics, vehicular speeds, vehicle composition, sight distance, and existing signage along the access roadways. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant transportation impacts, as appropriate.

- **Utilities and Service Systems** – The EIR will describe the existing utilities serving the project area. The EIR will address the ability and capacity of the existing utilities in the project area to serve the proposed project. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid significant impacts to utilities and service systems, as appropriate.
- **Cumulative Impacts** – The EIR will include a discussion of significant cumulative impacts of the project when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area. This section will cover all relevant subject areas discussed in the EIR (e.g., air quality, hydrology, traffic) and will specify which of the areas are anticipated to experience significant cumulative impacts. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce or avoid the project’s contribution to significant cumulative impacts, as appropriate.
- **Alternatives to the Project** – The EIR will identify and evaluate project alternatives that might reasonably be assumed to reduce significant project impacts. Analysis of a “No Project” alternative is required by law. Other alternatives that may be discussed include a reduced scale scenario, alternative land uses, and/or alternative location(s). The EIR will identify the degree to which each alternative might reduce one or more of the project’s impacts, whether the alternative could result in other or increased impacts, and the degree to which the alternative is consistent with the project’s goals and objectives. In accordance with CEQA, the EIR will identify an environmentally superior alternative, based on the number and degree of associated environmental impacts.
- **Other Required Sections** – The EIR will also include other information typically required for an EIR. This other information includes the following: 1) Growth Inducing Impacts; 2) Significant, Unavoidable Impacts; 3) Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes; 4) Consistency with Relevant Plans and Policies; 5) References; and 6) EIR Preparers. Relevant technical reports will be provided as appendices.



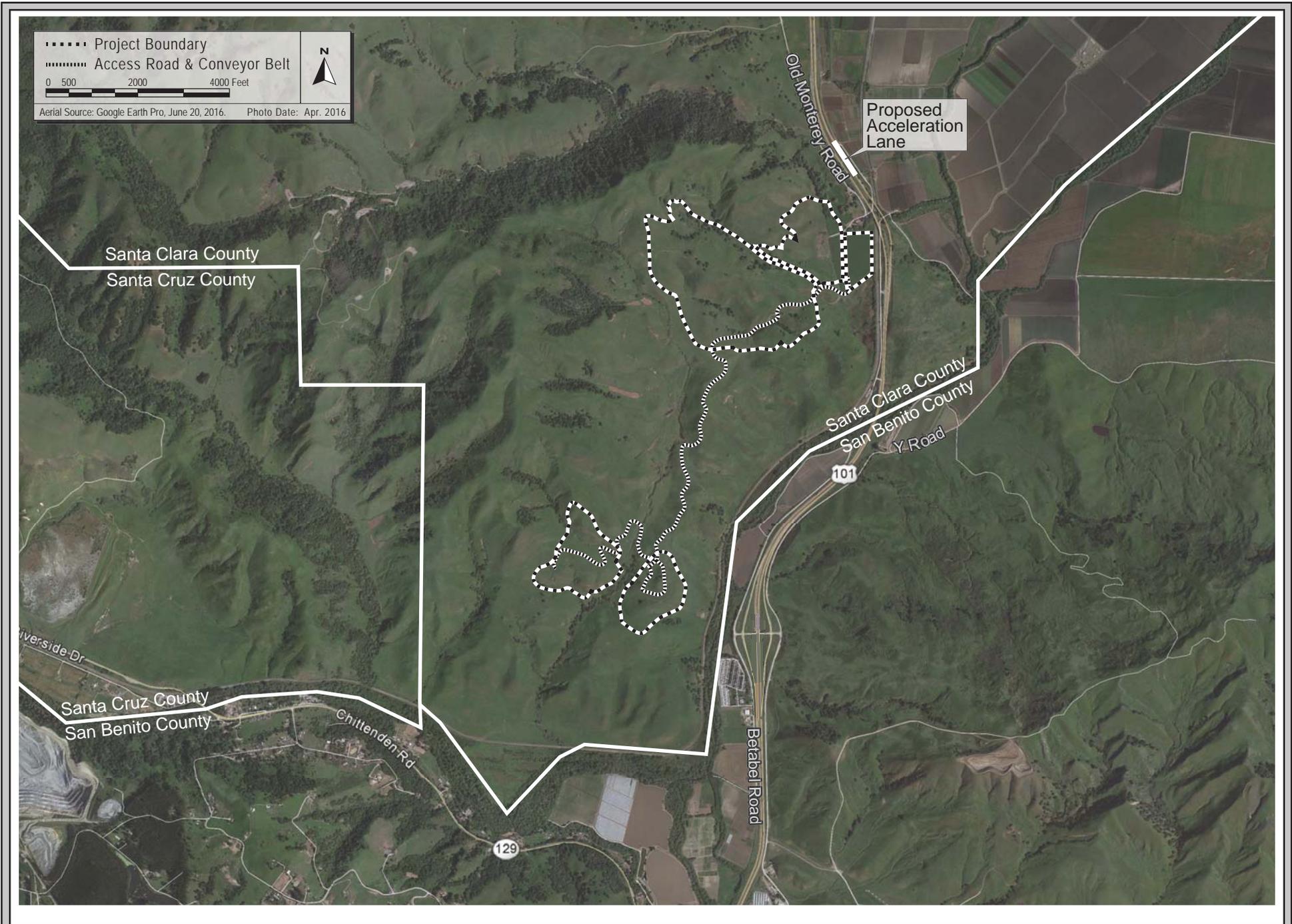
REGIONAL MAP - SARGENT QUARRY

FIGURE 1



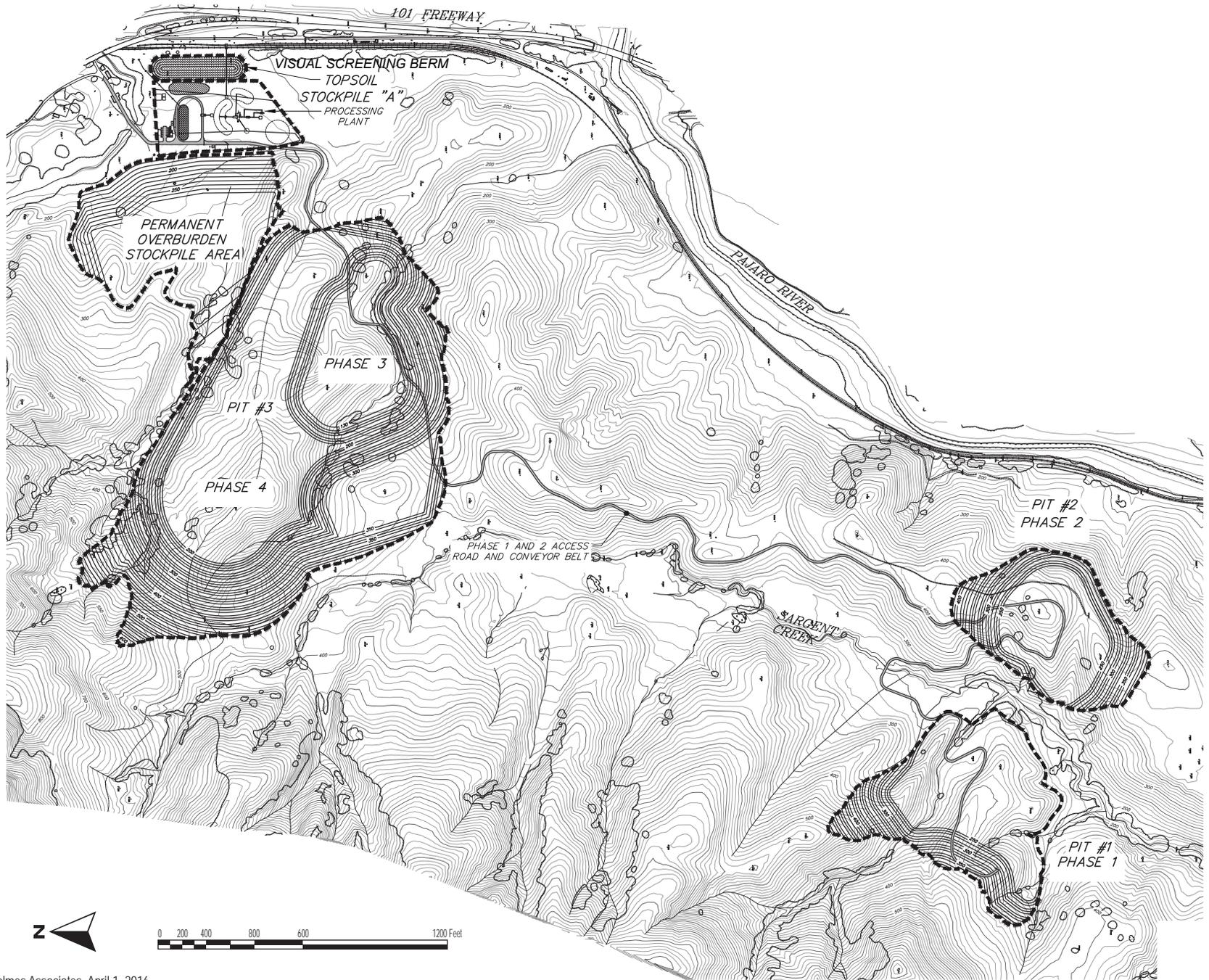
VICINITY MAP - SARGENT QUARRY

FIGURE 2



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH - SARGENT QUARRY

FIGURE 3



Source: Triad/Holmes Associates, April 1, 2016.

SITE PLAN - SARGENT QUARRY

FIGURE 4