



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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October 31, 2024

Environmental Health - Ukiah
Assessor
Farm Advisor
Agriculture Commissioner
Sonoma State University
Resource Lands Protection Committee

Department of Forestry/ CalFire
-Land Use
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Regional Water Quality Control Board
Hopland Municipal Advisory Council
Cloverdale Rancheria

Redwood Valley Rancheria
Potter Valey Tribe
Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Hopland Rural Fire District

CASE#: GP_2024-0002
DATE FILED: 10/10/2024
OWNER: FELIZ CREEK VINEYARD, LLC
APPLICANT: STEVEN AMATO
AGENT: JIM RONCO
REQUEST: General Plan Amendment and Rezone to change the land use classification of three (3) parcels from Rangeland (RL160) to Agricultural (AG40).
LOCATION: 3± miles northwest of the Hopland town center, 1.5± miles northwest of the intersection of Feliz Creek Road (CR 109) and County Road 110, located at 3557, 3565, & 3563 Feliz Creek Road (APNs: 047-080-11, 047-080-22, 047-080-27, and 047-050-31).
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT: 5
STAFF PLANNER: SHELBY MILLER
RESPONSE DUE DATE: November 14, 2024

PROJECT INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

www.mendocinocounty.org

Select "Government" from the drop-down; then locate Planning and Building Services/Public Agency Referrals.

Mendocino County Planning & Building Services is soliciting your input, which will be used in staff analysis and forwarded to the appropriate public hearing. You are invited to comment on any aspect of the proposed project(s). Please convey any requirements or conditions your agency requires for project compliance to the project coordinator at the above address, or submit your comments by email to pbs@mendocinocounty.org. Please note the case number and name of the project coordinator with all correspondence to this department.

We have reviewed the above application and recommend the following (please check one):

- No comment at this time.
Recommend conditional approval (attached).
Applicant to submit additional information (attach items needed, or contact the applicant directly, copying Planning and Building Services in any correspondence you may have with the applicant)
Recommend denial (Attach reasons for recommending denial).
Recommend preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (attach reasons why an EIR should be required).
Other comments (attach as necessary).

REVIEWED BY:

Signature Department Date

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APNS: 047-080-11, 047-080-22, 047-080-23, 047-080-27, and 047-050-31

PARCEL SIZE: 297± Acres

GENERAL PLAN: Rangeland 160-Acres Minimum (RL160)

ZONING: Rangeland 160-Acres Minimum (RL:160)

EXISTING USES: Agriculture & Residential

DISTRICT: 5 (Williams) & 1 (McGourty)

RELATED CASES:

	<u>ADJACENT GENERAL PLAN</u>	<u>ADJACENT ZONING</u>	<u>ADJACENT LOT SIZES</u>	<u>ADJACENT USES</u>
NORTH:	Rangeland (RL160)	Rangeland (RL160)	10± to 46± Acres	Residential
EAST:	Rangeland (RL160)	Rangeland (RL160)	8.5± to 22± Acres	Agriculture
SOUTH:	Rangeland (RL160)	Rangeland (RL160)	39± to 160± Acres	Agriculture
WEST:	Rangeland (RL160)	Rangeland (RL160)	92± to 160± Acres	Agriculture

REFERRAL AGENCIES

LOCAL

- Agricultural Commissioner
- Assessor’s Office
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Environmental Health (EH)
- Farm Advisor
- Hopland Rural Fire Protection District

- Hopland MAC
 - Resource Lands Protection Com.
 - Sonoma State University
- STATE**
- CALFIRE (Land Use)
 - California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife
 - Regional Water Quality Control Board

TRIBAL

- Cloverdale Rancheria
- Potter Valley Tribe
- Redwood Valley Rancheria
- Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

STAFF PLANNER: SHELBY MILLER

DATE: 10/31/2024

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

1. MAC:

GIS

Hopland

2. FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE:

CALFIRE FRAP maps/GIS

High Fire/ Moderate

3. FIRE RESPONSIBILITY AREA:

CALFIRE FRAP maps/GIS

Hopland Rural Fire Protection District

4. FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION:

GIS

Grazing, Prime, Unique Farmland, and Rural Residential & Rural Commercial

5. FLOOD ZONE CLASSIFICATION:

FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)

NO

6. COASTAL GROUNDWATER RESOURCE AREA:

Coastal Groundwater Study/GIS

N/A

7. SOIL CLASSIFICATION:

Mendocino County Soils Study Eastern/Western Part

Eastern Part

8. PYGMY VEGETATION OR PYGMY CAPABLE SOIL:

LCP maps, Pygmy Soils Maps; GIS

N/A

9. WILLIAMSON ACT CONTRACT:

GIS/Mendocino County Assessor's Office

YES

10. TIMBER PRODUCTION ZONE:

GIS

NO

11. WETLANDS CLASSIFICATION:

GIS

Yes

12. EARTHQUAKE FAULT ZONE:

Earthquake Fault Zone Maps; GIS

NO

13. AIRPORT LAND USE PLANNING AREA:

Airport Land Use Plan; GIS

NO

14. SUPERFUND/BROWNFIELD/HAZMAT SITE:

GIS; General Plan 3-11

NO

15. NATURAL DIVERSITY DATABASE:

CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Rarefind Database/GIS

NO

16. STATE FOREST/PARK/RECREATION AREA ADJACENT:

GIS; General Plan 3-10

No

17. LANDSLIDE HAZARD:

Hazards and Landslides Map; GIS; Policy RM-61; General Plan 4-44

No

18. WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE REQUIRED:

Policy RM-7; General Plan 4-34

No

19. WILD AND SCENIC RIVER:

www.rivers.gov (Eel Only); GIS

N/A

20. SPECIFIC PLAN/SPECIAL PLAN AREA:

Various Adopted Specific Plan Areas; GIS

N/A

21. STATE CLEARINGHOUSE REQUIRED:

Policy

N/A

22. OAK WOODLAND AREA:

USDA

N/A

23. HARBOR DISTRICT:

Sec. 20.512

N/A

FOR PROJECTS WITHIN THE COASTAL ZONE ONLY

24. LCP LAND USE CLASSIFICATION:

LCP Land Use maps/GIS

25. LCP LAND CAPABILITIES & NATURAL HAZARDS:

LCP Land Capabilities maps/GIS; 20.500

26. LCP HABITATS & RESOURCES:

LCP Habitat maps/GIS; 20.496

27. COASTAL COMMISSION APPEALABLE AREA:

Post LCP Certification Permit and Appeal Jurisdiction maps/GIS; 20.544

28. CDP EXCLUSION ZONE:

CDP Exclusion Zone maps/GIS

NO

29. HIGHLY SCENIC AREA:

Highly Scenic & Tree Removal Area Maps/GIS; Secs. 20.504.015, 20.504.020

NO

30. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES & NATURAL AREAS:

Biological Resources & Natural Area Map; GIS; General Plan 4-9

31. BLUFFTOP GEOLOGY:

GIS; 20.500.020



PLANNING & BUILDING SERVICES

CASE NO:	GP 2024-0002/R 2024-02
DATE FILED:	10/10/24
FEE:	
RECEIPT NO:	PRJ 64200
RECEIVED BY:	ROF
Office Use Only	

APPLICATION FORM

APPLICANT:

Name: Steven Amato Phone: 848-466-1288
 Mailing Address: 4600 Feliz Creek Rd.
 City: Hopland State/Zip: CA 95545 Email: stevenamato@gamil.com

PROPERTY OWNER:

Name: Feliz Creek Vineyards, LLC Phone: 848-466-1288
 Mailing Address: 500 Craig Rd. #202
 City: Manalapan State/Zip: NJ 07726 Email:

AGENT:

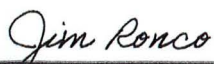

Name: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC Phone: 707-477-7616
 Mailing Address: 445 N. State St.
 City: Ukiah State/Zip: Ca 95482 Email: jim@jimroncoconsulting.com

ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER/S: 047-080-11,22,23,27 & 047-080-31

TYPE OF APPLICATION:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Permit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Plan Amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Permit – Cottage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Preserve: New Contract | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Division – Minor | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Permit – Minor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Preserve: Cancellation | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Division – Major | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Permit – Major |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Preserve: Rescind & ReEnter | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Division – Parcel | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Permit – Modification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airport Land Use | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Division – Re-Subdivision | <input type="checkbox"/> Variance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development Review | <input type="checkbox"/> Modification of Conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exception | <input type="checkbox"/> Reversion to Acreage | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flood Hazard Development Permit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rezoning | |

I certify that the information submitted with this application is true and accurate.


9/19/24

9.26.2024

Signature of Applicant/Agent
 Date
Signature of Owner
Date

SITE AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to relate information concerning your application to the Department of Planning and Building Services and other agencies who will be reviewing your project proposal. Please remember that the clearer picture that you give us of your project and the site, the easier it will be to promptly process your application. Please answer all questions. Those questions which do not pertain to your project please indicate "Not applicable" or "N/A".

THE PROJECT

1. Describe your project. Include secondary improvements such as wells, septic systems, grading, vegetation removal, roads, etc. If the proposal is for cancellation of a Williamson Act contract, please specify a proposed alternative use for the land.

See Sheet "A"

2. Structures/Lot Coverage	NO. OF UNITS		SQUARE FOOTAGE		
	EXISTING	PROPOSED	EXISTING	PROPOSED	TOTAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single Family <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Home <input type="checkbox"/> Duplex <input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	3	3			
GRAND TOTAL (Equal to gross area of Parcel):					

3. Is the project commercial, industrial, or institutional? If yes, complete item 3. If no, skip to item 4.

Estimated No. of Employees per shift: _____

Estimated No. of shifts per day: _____

Type of loading facilities proposed: _____

4. Will the project be phased? (Work being done over separate periods of time)

NO **YES** If yes, explain your plans for phasing:

5. Will vegetation be removed on areas other than the building sites and roads?

NO **YES** If yes, explain:

6. Will the project involve the use or disposal of potentially hazardous materials such as toxic substances, flammables, or explosives?

NO **YES** If yes, explain:

7. How much off-street parking will be provided?

	Number	Size
No. of covered spaces:	_____	_____
No. of uncovered spaces:	_____	_____
No. of standard spaces:	_____	_____
No. of accessible spaces:	_____	_____
Existing no. of spaces:	_____	_____
Proposed additional spaces:	_____	_____
Total:	_____	_____

8. Is any road construction or grading planned? If yes, grading and drainage plans may be required.

NO **YES** Also, please describe the terrain to be traversed. (e.g., steep, moderate slope, flat, etc.)

9. For grading or road construction, complete the following:

Amount of cut: _____ cubic yards

Amount of fill: _____ cubic yards

Max. height of fill slope: _____ feet

Max. height of cut slope: _____ feet

Amount of import/export: _____ cubic yards

Location of borrow or disposal site: _____

10. Does the project involve sand removal, mining or gravel extraction? If yes, detailed extraction, reclamation and monitoring plans may be required.

NO YES

11. Will the proposed development convert land currently or previously used for agriculture to another use?

NO YES

12. Will the development provide public or private recreation opportunities?

NO YES If yes, explain how:

13. Is the proposed development visible from State Route 1 or other scenic route?

NO YES

14. Is the proposed development visible from a park, beach or other recreational area?

NO YES

15. Does the development involve diking, filling, dredging or placing structures in open coastal water, wetlands, estuaries or lakes?

Diking: NO YES

Filling: NO YES

Dredging: NO YES

Structures: Open Coastal Waters Wetlands Estuaries Lakes

If so, what is the amount of material to be dredged/filled?: _____ cubic yards

Location of dredged material disposal site?: _____

Has a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit been applied for? NO YES

16. Will there be any exterior lighting?

NO YES If yes, describe below and identify the location of all exterior lighting on the plot and building plans.

17. Utilities will be supplied to the site as follows:

Electricity: Utility Company (service exists to parcel)

Utility Company (requires extension of service to site): _____ feet _____ miles

On Site Generation – Specify:

Gas: Utility Company/Tank

On Site Generation – Specify:

None

Telephone: NO YES

18. What will be the method of sewage disposal?

- Community Sewage System (specify supplier): _____
- Septic Tank
- Other (specify): _____

19. What will be the domestic water source:

- Community Water System (specify supplier): _____
- Well
- Spring
- Other (specify): _____

20. Are there any associated projects and/or adjacent properties under your ownership?

- NO YES If yes, list below (Assessor's Parcel Number, address, etc.)

21. List and describe any other related permits and other public approval required for this project, including those required by other County departments, city, regional, State and Federal agencies:

None.

22. Describe the location of the site in terms of readily identifiable landmarks: (e.g., mailboxes, mile posts, street intersections, etc.)

Site is approximately 3.5 miles west of the intersection of Mountain House and Feliz Creek Roads.

Gate has address on sign (4600) as well as a sign reading Rancho Feliz Vineyards.

23. Are there existing structures on the property? If yes and the proposal is for a subdivision, describe below and identify the use of each structure on the plot plan or tentative map.

- NO YES

24. Will any existing structure be demolished or removed? If yes, describe the type of development to be demolished or removed, including the relocation site, if applicable.

- NO YES

Sheet "A"

Project Description: Zoning Change from RL-160 to AG-40 for Feliz Creek Vineyards

Introduction

The project proposes a General Plan amendment and zoning change for Parcel 1, Parcel 2, and Parcel 4 of the Feliz Creek Vineyards property, transitioning the zoning designation from RL-160 (Rangeland, 160-acre minimum) to AG-40 (Agricultural, 40-acre minimum). This change is necessary to enhance the viability of agricultural operations on the property, ensure the long-term sustainability of the vineyard and grazing uses, and align the zoning with the surrounding land uses and the objectives of the Mendocino County General Plan.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

The Feliz Creek Vineyards property is located within the northern branch of Feliz Creek, an area characterized by a diverse mix of land uses, including residential, agricultural, and grazing operations. The existing parcels vary in size and use. The subject properties lying easterly of Feliz Creek are:

1. **Parcel 1 (9 acres):** Contains a residence.
2. **Parcel 2 (16 acres):** Unimproved land located between the vineyard and the residence.
3. **Parcel 3 (89 acres):** Primarily used as a vineyard (25.5 acres currently under cultivation), including residences, a reservoir, and agricultural buildings.

The remaining parcel, located west of Feliz Creek, is a 189-acre parcel utilized exclusively for grazing and will remain zoned as RL-160.

The surrounding properties exhibit a range of parcel sizes and uses, with zoning primarily designated as Rangeland. However, many parcels in the area are engaged in agricultural activities similar to those proposed for Feliz Creek Vineyards.

Cohesiveness of Land Uses

The subject parcels, which include APNs 04708011, 04708022, 04708023, 04708027, and 04705031, form a crucial part of the agricultural landscape in the northern branch of Feliz Creek. The existing use of these parcels as vineyards, grazing land, and residential areas seamlessly integrates with the surrounding land uses, creating a harmonious blend of agricultural and rural residential activities that is consistent with the Mendocino County General Plan.

Integration with Neighboring Parcels:

- To the north, northeast, and east, the Bell Tract Subdivision comprises 44 parcels ranging from 8 to 16 acres, all zoned RL-160. These parcels, while mostly residential, include several lots under small scale cultivation. This mixture of residential and agricultural uses, while allowed in the zoning designation, does not represent the land use designation of range land contained in the General Plan because of the existing parcels sizes and densities of these adjacent parcels. The majority of the lots appear to be under Williamson Act contract without any apparent conforming uses occurring on the parcels.

- The parcels to the northwest and west of Feliz Creek are larger, ranging from 115 to 215 acres, and are similarly under Williamson Act contracts. These lands are predominantly used for grazing and open space, but some parcels also support cultivation. This mirrors the proposed use of the Feliz Creek Vineyards property, where agricultural activities exist alongside grazing/open space, creating a unified agricultural landscape. The parcels are under Williamson Act contract.
- To the south and southwest, extending to the western boundary of the Sanel Rancho, the land uses include a mix of residential, agricultural, and grazing activities. Parcels here range from 39 to 160 acres, and like the Feliz Creek Vineyards property, they are zoned RL and used for a combination of purposes. The majority of the parcels are under Williamson Act contract. This demonstrates a regional pattern of mixed-use land that is consistent with the county's goals of preserving agricultural viability while accommodating residential uses.

Rationale for Zoning Change

1. Enhanced Agricultural Viability:

The existing RL-160 zoning imposes limitations that are incompatible with the efficient and sustainable management of a multi-use agricultural property. By rezoning to AG-40, the project will:

- **Facilitate Agricultural Financing:** Agricultural zoning provides greater flexibility for financing, a critical factor for maintaining and expanding vineyard and other agricultural operations. Lenders prefer zoning that supports a variety of agricultural uses and allows for smaller parcel sizes, which increases the value and marketability of the land.
- **Support Future Agricultural Development:** The rezoning will enable the replanting of vineyard blocks removed due to disease and allow for the expansion of agricultural uses on the property, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the vineyard.

2. Inappropriateness of RL Zoning for the Subject and Surrounding Parcels

The RL zoning designation, which requires a minimum parcel size of 160 acres, is ill-suited for the subject parcels, which range from approximately 9 to 89 acres. This discrepancy not only creates a regulatory mismatch but also imposes practical challenges that hinder the effective use and development of the land.

Examples of Incompatibility:

- **Parcel Size Discrepancies:** The surrounding parcels fall well below the 160-acre minimum required by RL zoning. For instance, the Bell Tract Subdivision to the north, northeast, and east consists of 44 parcels ranging from 8 to 16 acres, while parcels to the south and southwest range from 39 to 160 acres. These sizes are far more consistent with AG zoning, which allows for a minimum parcel size of 40 acres (AG-40). The RL zoning designation, therefore, imposes an unreasonable constraint on these smaller parcels, limiting their use and development potential.

- **Land Use Patterns:** The subject parcels are currently used for vineyards, grazing, and residential purposes—uses that are more appropriate for AG zoning. The AG designation is designed to support a diverse range of agricultural activities on parcels of varying sizes, including those under 160 acres, which is common in the subject area. In contrast, the RL zoning is intended for large, expansive rangelands that are primarily undeveloped and used for extensive grazing. The smaller parcel sizes and existing agricultural activities on the subject parcels demonstrate that AG zoning would better accommodate the actual land use and economic needs of the area.

3. Appropriateness of AG Zoning for the Subject Parcels

Given the existing challenges posed by RL zoning, along with the current land use and the smaller parcel sizes, AG zoning is a far more appropriate designation for the subject parcels. The AG zoning classification, particularly AG-40, aligns with the current and future needs of these parcels in several key ways:

Supporting Agricultural Viability & Diverse Agricultural Uses:

- **Flexibility in Land Use:** AG zoning is designed to accommodate a range of agricultural activities, including vineyards, orchards, and other forms of cultivation, which are currently in place on the subject parcels. The AG-40 designation would allow for the continued use of the land for high-value agricultural purposes, while also providing the flexibility to adapt to future agricultural needs, such as replanting or expanding operations and potential planting of alternative crops such as olives or kiwis.
- **Appropriate Parcel Size Standards:** The AG-40 zoning designation acknowledges the reality of smaller agricultural parcels, allowing for a minimum parcel size of 40 acres. This is far more suitable for the subject parcels, which range from 9 to 89 acres. AG zoning would eliminate the regulatory inconsistencies between the current parcel sizes and the RL zoning requirements, creating a more logical and functional land use framework.
- **Facilitating Agricultural Development:** AG zoning supports a wider range of agricultural activities, including the construction of farm labor housing, which may be necessary as vineyard operations expand. This flexibility makes AG zoning more suitable for the subject parcels, ensuring they can be used to their full potential without the constraints imposed by RL zoning.
- **The transition from RL to AG zoning ensures that the land uses remain compatible with surrounding properties.** The proposed changes will continue to support agricultural activities, similar to the neighboring parcels, ensuring a cohesive land use pattern that is in harmony with the surrounding landscape. The ability to construct farm labor housing in the future, as allowed under AG zoning, further integrates with the needs of the agricultural community, supporting the workforce essential to maintaining these operations and supplements sustainability.
- **The project supports the General Plan's vision of preserving the rural character of the county.** By maintaining the land for agricultural purposes, the project contributes to the scenic and open space

values that define the rural areas of Mendocino County. The continuation of grazing activities on the 189-acre parcel west of Feliz Creek, coupled with the vineyard operations, exemplifies the balanced use of land for both agricultural productivity and environmental stewardship.

Improving Financing Opportunities:

- **Increased Lender Confidence:** AG zoning aligns the land use with the zoning designation, reducing the risk perceived by lenders. This makes it easier to secure loans for agricultural operations, as lenders are more likely to provide favorable terms when the zoning supports the intended use of the land.
- **Mismatch Between Zoning and Land Use:** Lenders typically assess the risk associated with a loan based on the land's current use, its zoning designation, and its potential for future development. For parcels zoned as RL but used for more intensive agricultural activities, such as vineyards, the mismatch creates uncertainty. Lenders may perceive RL-zoned properties as being at higher risk of non-compliance with zoning regulations or facing restrictions that could limit future development, making them less attractive for financing.
- **Supporting Long-Term Agricultural Success:** The ability to obtain financing is crucial for the long-term success of agricultural operations. AG zoning not only facilitates the current use of the land but also supports future development, ensuring the land remains economically viable and productive.
- **Limited Flexibility in Land Use:** RL zoning is designed for large, undeveloped rangelands, where the primary use is extensive grazing. This zoning restricts other forms of agricultural development, such as the construction of additional agricultural infrastructure or farm labor housing, which are crucial for the efficient operation of smaller, intensively managed parcels. The lack of flexibility under RL zoning increases the risk for lenders, who prefer properties with zoning that allows for a broader range of uses and development options, as is the case with AG zoning.
 - A survey conducted by the American Bankers Association revealed that agricultural lenders are increasingly prioritizing properties with flexible zoning that supports a variety of agricultural uses. Properties with restrictive zoning, such as RL, are often deemed higher risk, leading to higher interest rates or outright denial of loan applications.
 - According to a report from the California Agricultural Lending Institute, parcels zoned for agriculture (AG) are more likely to secure favorable loan terms compared to those with rangeland zoning (RL), particularly when the land use does not align with the zoning designation. Lenders are more confident in financing AG-zoned properties due to the predictability and stability of agricultural land uses and the broader range of permitted activities.

- In a study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, it was noted that the availability of agricultural loans is significantly influenced by zoning designations. Properties zoned for agriculture, like AG-40, are more likely to receive financing because lenders view them as lower risk and more adaptable to the needs of modern agricultural operations.

Compatibility with General Plan Goals:

The project is consistent with the Mendocino County General Plan goals and policies, particularly those related to the protection and enhancement of agricultural lands:

- **Goal RM-10 (Agriculture):** The project supports the protection of agriculture as a primary industry essential to the county's economy and quality of life. By maintaining agricultural land and limiting incompatible uses, the rezoning aligns with the long-term objectives of the General Plan.
- **Policy RM-107:** The proposed zoning change will diversify and expand the agricultural economic base, ensuring that the property remains viable for agricultural production.
- **Policy DE-36:** Encouraging the development of onsite housing for farmworkers, which is more feasible under AG-40 zoning, aligns with the county's goals for supporting agricultural labor.
- **Policy RM-103:** Maintain extensive agricultural land areas and limit incompatible uses.
- **Policy RM-104:** The County supports policies and programs to maintain and enhance the viability of agricultural operations and retention of agricultural land.
- **Policy DE-36:** Encourage farmers to develop onsite housing for farmworkers and their families.

Environmental and Infrastructure Considerations:

The project has been reviewed for potential environmental impacts, including effects on geology, hydrology, water quality, biological resources, and cultural resources. The findings indicate that the impacts are less than significant, and the project will not require unintended infrastructure expansion. Additionally, the property has adequate access via Feliz Creek Road, and existing utilities such as electricity, telephone, and internet services are readily available. The rezoning will not necessitate additional infrastructure development, ensuring compatibility with existing community resources.

Williamson Act Compliance:

The property is under a Williamson Act contract, and the proposed zoning change is consistent with the Act's objectives. The rezoning will enhance the agricultural use of the land while maintaining its eligibility for the tax benefits provided under the Williamson Act.

In Conclusion:

1. The proposed General Plan amendment and zoning change for the Feliz Creek Vineyards property from RL-160 to AG-40 is a strategic and necessary step to ensure the continued

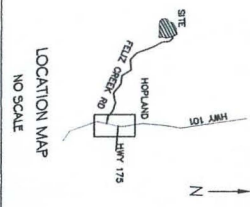
viability of the property's agricultural operations. The rezoning aligns with the county's goals for protecting and enhancing agricultural lands, supports the long-term sustainability of the vineyard, and is compatible with surrounding land uses. Furthermore, the change will facilitate agricultural financing, support future development, and comply with the environmental and infrastructure standards outlined in the Mendocino County General Plan.

The project represents a responsible and forward-thinking approach to land management, ensuring that Feliz Creek Vineyards can continue to contribute to the agricultural economy of Mendocino County while preserving the rural character and environmental integrity of the region.

2. The proposed General Plan amendment and rezoning for the Feliz Creek Vineyards property will reinforce the agricultural identity of the area while ensuring land use compatibility with neighboring properties. This project exemplifies the cohesive integration of agricultural and residential uses, in line with the Mendocino County General Plan's objectives for sustainable development and rural preservation. By aligning with the existing land use patterns and the broader goals of the county's planning framework, the project enhances the overall land use harmony in the Feliz Creek region.
3. The current RL zoning designation is inappropriate for the subject parcels due to the significant mismatch between the zoning's intended parcel size and land use and the actual conditions on the ground. The challenges in obtaining financing under RL zoning further underscore the need for a zoning change. AG zoning, particularly AG-40, is a much more suitable designation that aligns with the existing land uses, supports agricultural development, and improves access to financing. The proposed General Plan amendment and rezoning will correct the current zoning inconsistency, ensuring the land is used in a manner that is both economically viable and consistent with the broader goals of the Mendocino County General Plan.
4. Most importantly, financing is essential to developing and continuing agricultural operations, and revising the properties' current zoning from RL to AG is essential to obtaining that funding:
 - The **American Bankers Association (ABA)** regularly surveys agricultural lenders to gauge their concerns and lending practices. In their most recent survey, lenders emphasized that properties with restrictive zoning, like RL, present challenges due to limitations in land use flexibility. This is a concern for financing, especially when the zoning does not match the land's actual use or potential. Lenders prefer properties with more adaptive and predictable zoning, such as AG, which provides broader opportunities for agricultural activities and infrastructure development, including farm labor housing.
 - Furthermore, the **2022 ABA Agricultural Lender Survey** showed that land value stability and flexibility are key factors that lenders look for when approving loans. RL-zoned properties, which are restricted to larger parcel sizes and extensive grazing, often don't meet these criteria. The more flexible AG zoning, particularly AG-40, allows

for diversified agricultural use and expansion, which reassures lenders about the property's economic viability.

- Additionally, **Farmer Mac** data indicates that financing for agricultural properties is strongly linked to land use compatibility. Zoning that supports intensive agricultural operations, like AG zoning, aligns better with modern lending practices, as it offers higher development potential and less regulatory risk. Lenders reported that mismatched zoning and land use, like RL-zoned land used for vineyards or other intensive agriculture, increases the perceived lending risk, often resulting in higher interest rates or loan denials.

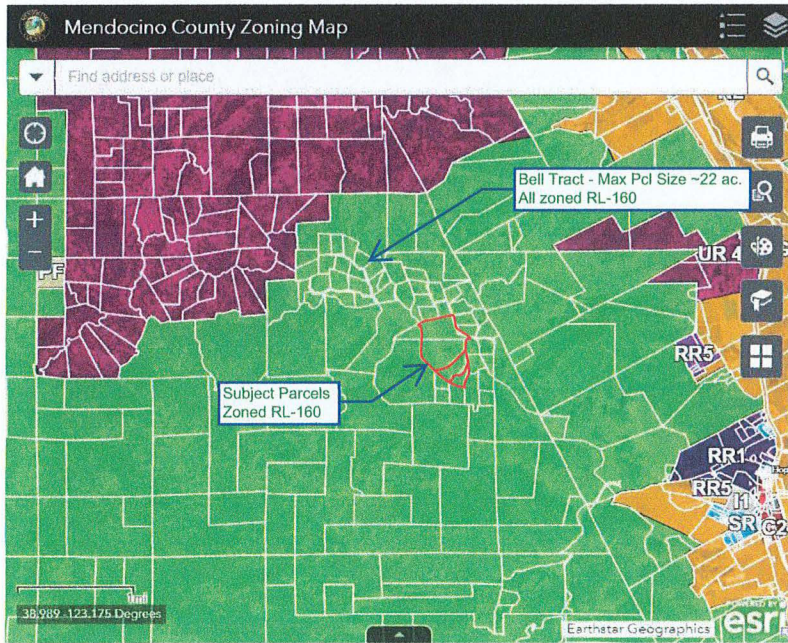


SHADED PARCELS TO BE REZONED
FROM RL-160 TO AG-40

SCALE: None


Map of Proposed Rezoned Parcels
for the land of
Feliz Creek Vineyards
Located in Hopland, CA September, 2024

PREPARED BY: JIM RONCO CONSULTING, LLC
445 North State Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
jim@jimroncoconsulting.com
(707) 477-7616



CERTIFICATION AND SITE VIEW AUTHORIZATION

1. I hereby certify that I have read this completed application and that, to the best of my knowledge, the information in this application, and all attached appendices and exhibits, is complete and correct. I understand that the failure to provide any requested information or any misstatements submitted in support of the application shall be grounds for either refusing to accept this application, for denying the permit, for suspending or revoking a permit issued on the basis of such misrepresentations, or for seeking of such further relief as may seem proper to the County.
2. I hereby grant permission for County Planning and Building Services staff and hearing bodies to enter upon and site view the premises for which this application is made in order to obtain information necessary for the preparation of required reports and render its decision.



 Owner/Authorized Agent

09.26.2024

 Date

NOTE: IF SIGNED BY AGENT, OWNER MUST SIGN BELOW.

AUTHORIZATION OF AGENT

I hereby authorize _____ to act as my representative and to bind me in all matters concerning this application.

 Owner

 Date

MAIL DIRECTION

To facilitate proper handling of this application, please indicate the names and mailing addresses of individuals to whom you wish correspondence and/or staff reports mailed if different from those identified on Page 1 of the application form.

Name	Name	Name
Mailing Address	Mailing Address	Mailing Address

Indemnification And Hold Harmless

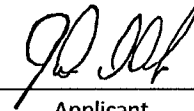
ORDINANCE NO. 3780, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 4, 1991, requires applicants for discretionary land use approvals, to sign the following Indemnification Agreement. Failure to sign this agreement will result in the application being considered incomplete and withheld from further processing.

Indemnification Agreement

As part of this application, applicant agrees to defend, indemnify, release and hold harmless the County of Mendocino, its agents, officers, attorneys, employees, boards and commissions, as more particularly set forth in Mendocino County Code Section 1.04.120, from any claim, action or proceeding brought against any of the foregoing individuals or entities, the purpose of which is to attack, set aside, void or annul the approval of this application or adoption of the environmental document which accompanies it. The indemnification shall include, but not be limited to, damages, costs, expenses, attorney fees or expert witness fees that may be asserted by any person or entity, including the applicant, arising out of or in connection with the approval of this application, whether or not there is concurrent, passive or active negligence on the part of the County, its agents, officers, attorneys, employees, boards and commissions.

09.26.2024

Date



Applicant



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & BUILDING SVCS.

860 NORTH BUSH STREET • UKIAH, CALIFORNIA 95482
120 WEST FIR STREET • FORT BRAGG, CALIFORNIA 95437

JULIA KROG, DIRECTOR
PHONE: 707-234-6650
FAX: 707-463-5709
FB PHONE: 707-964-5379
FB FAX: 707-961-2427
pbs@mendocinocounty.gov
www.mendocinocounty.org/pbs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DEPOSIT/HOURLY FEE

By signing below, the applicant acknowledges that the staff at Planning and Building Services has discussed the potential for collection of a deposit fee for the projects listed below (as adopted by the Board of Supervisors Resolution No.'s 11-072, 16-150, 18-122, 19-170, 21-194 and 23-190)

1. Division of Land Project
2. General Plan Project
3. Coastal Project
4. Zoning Project
5. Administrative Project
6. Cannabis Project
7. Private Road Naming

Once an application has been submitted and the processing costs approach 80% of the application fee, additional staff processing time will be billed at **\$98.00/hour**. Staff will notify the applicant/owner that a deposit equal to 50% of the initial filing fee is required for further processing, and more than one deposit may be required depending on the complexity of the project and the staff time necessary to complete application processing.

I acknowledge that I was advised of the deposit fee for continued processing after the initial application fee has been expended.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Krog".

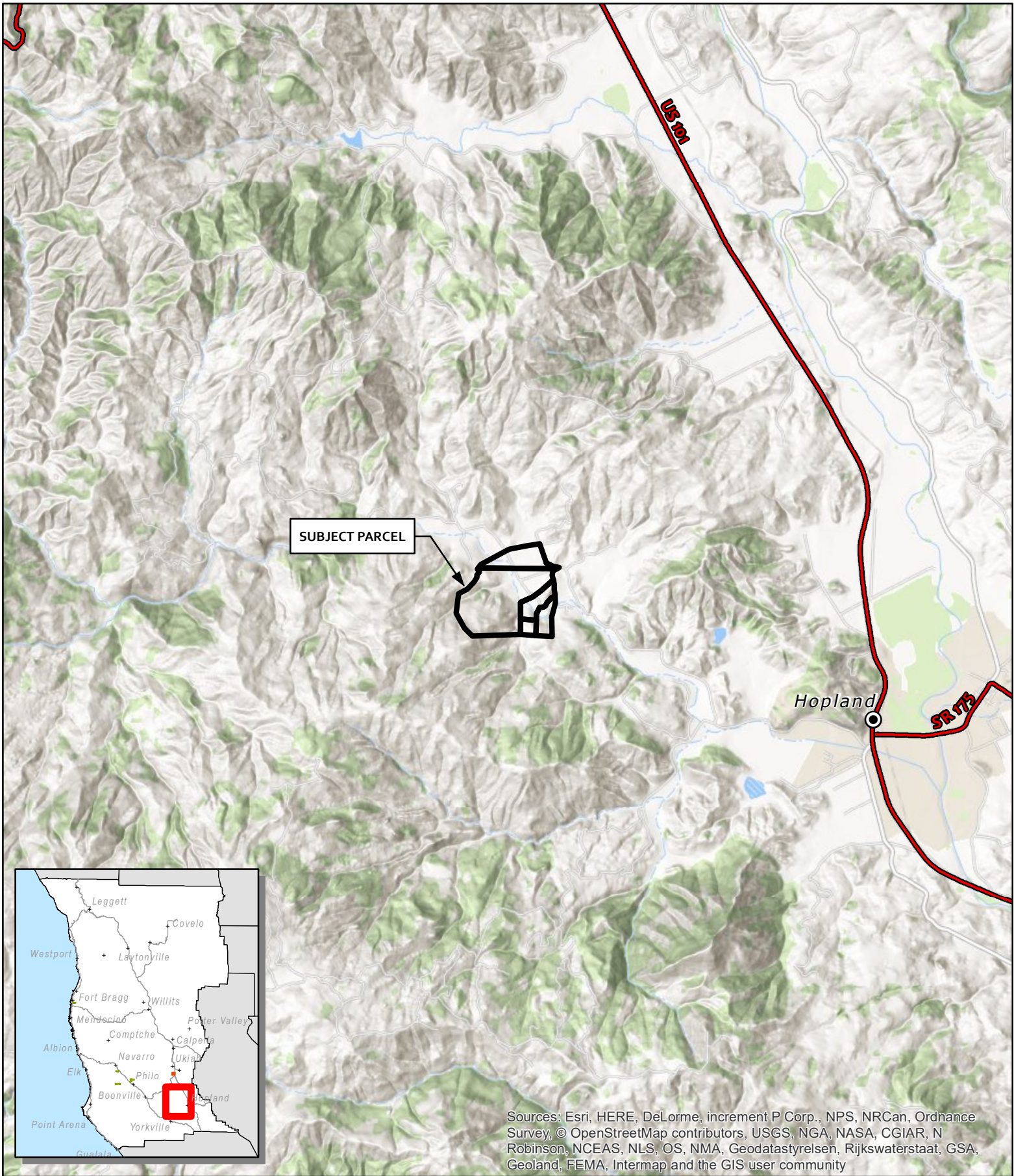
Applicant Signature

09.26.2024

Date

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Project or Permit Number

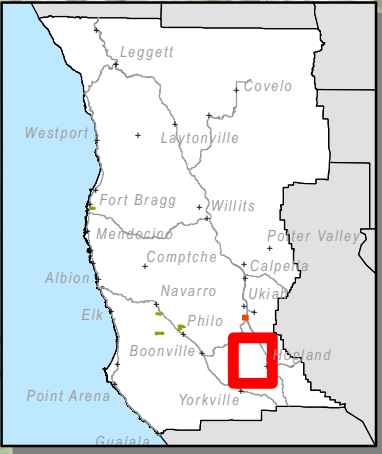


SUBJECT PARCEL

Hopland

US 101

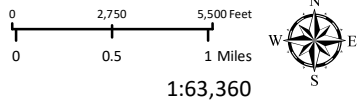
SR 173



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, increment P Corp., NPS, NRCan, Ordnance Survey, © OpenStreetMap contributors, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community

CASE: GP 2024-0002 & R 2024-0002
OWNER: Feliz Creek Vineyards, LLC
APN: Various
APLCT: Steven Amato
AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

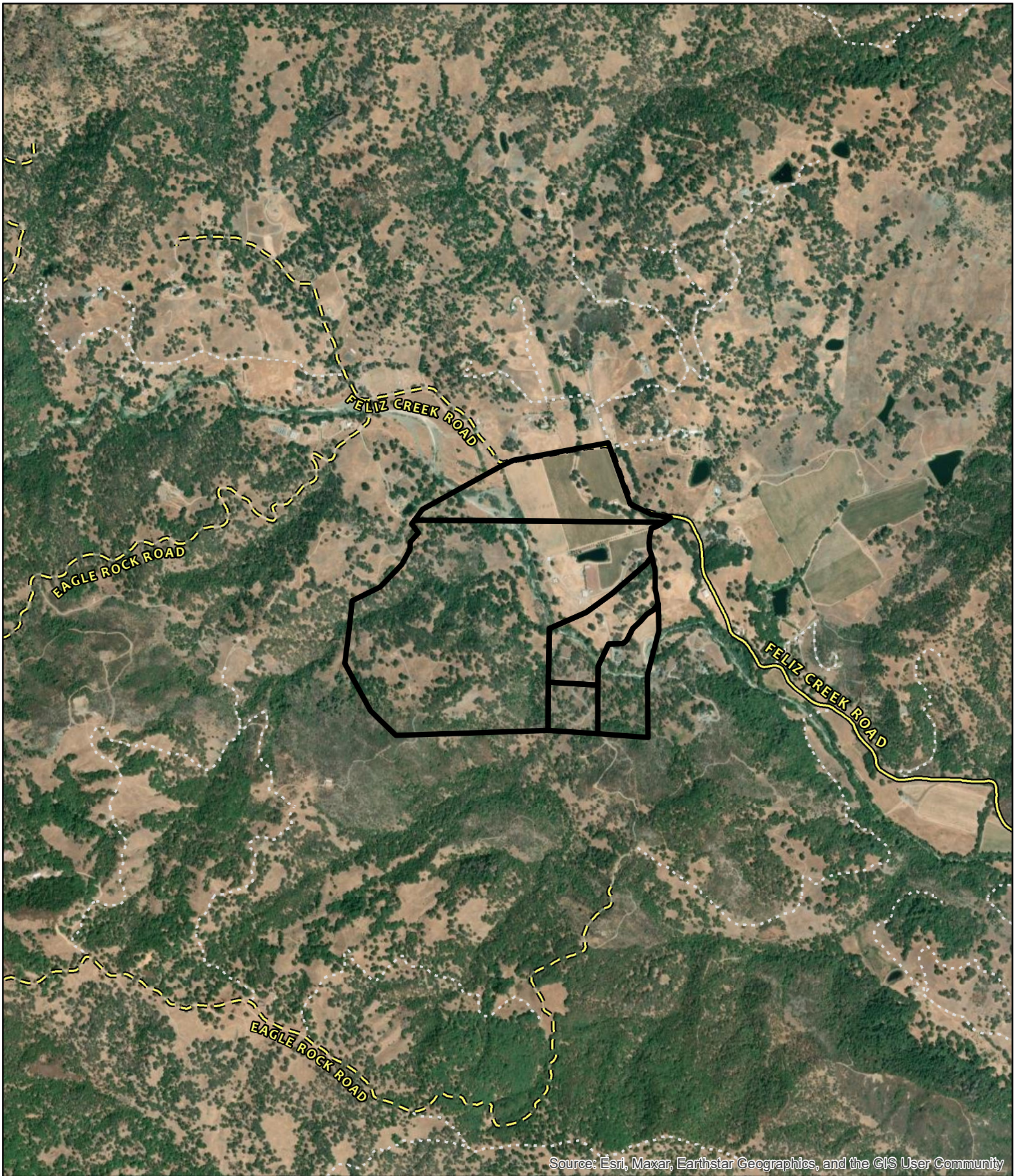
● Major Towns & Places
 — Highways



1:63,360


LOCATION

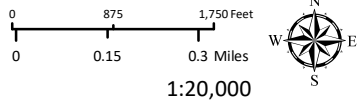
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Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

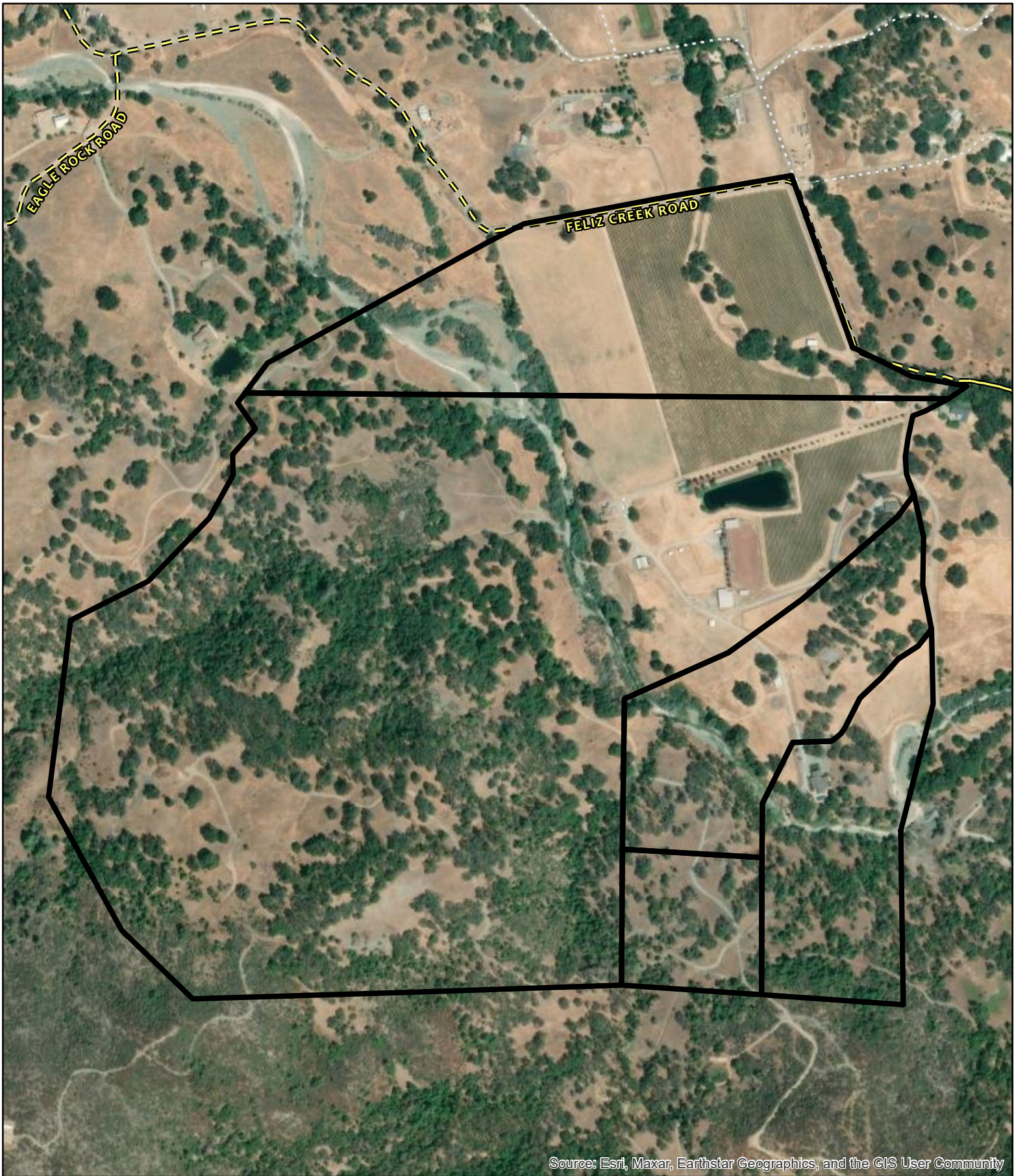
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ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

-  Public Roads
-  Private Roads
-  Driveways/Unnamed Roads



1:20,000
AERIAL IMAGERY

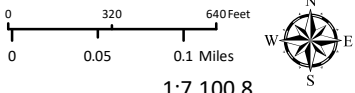
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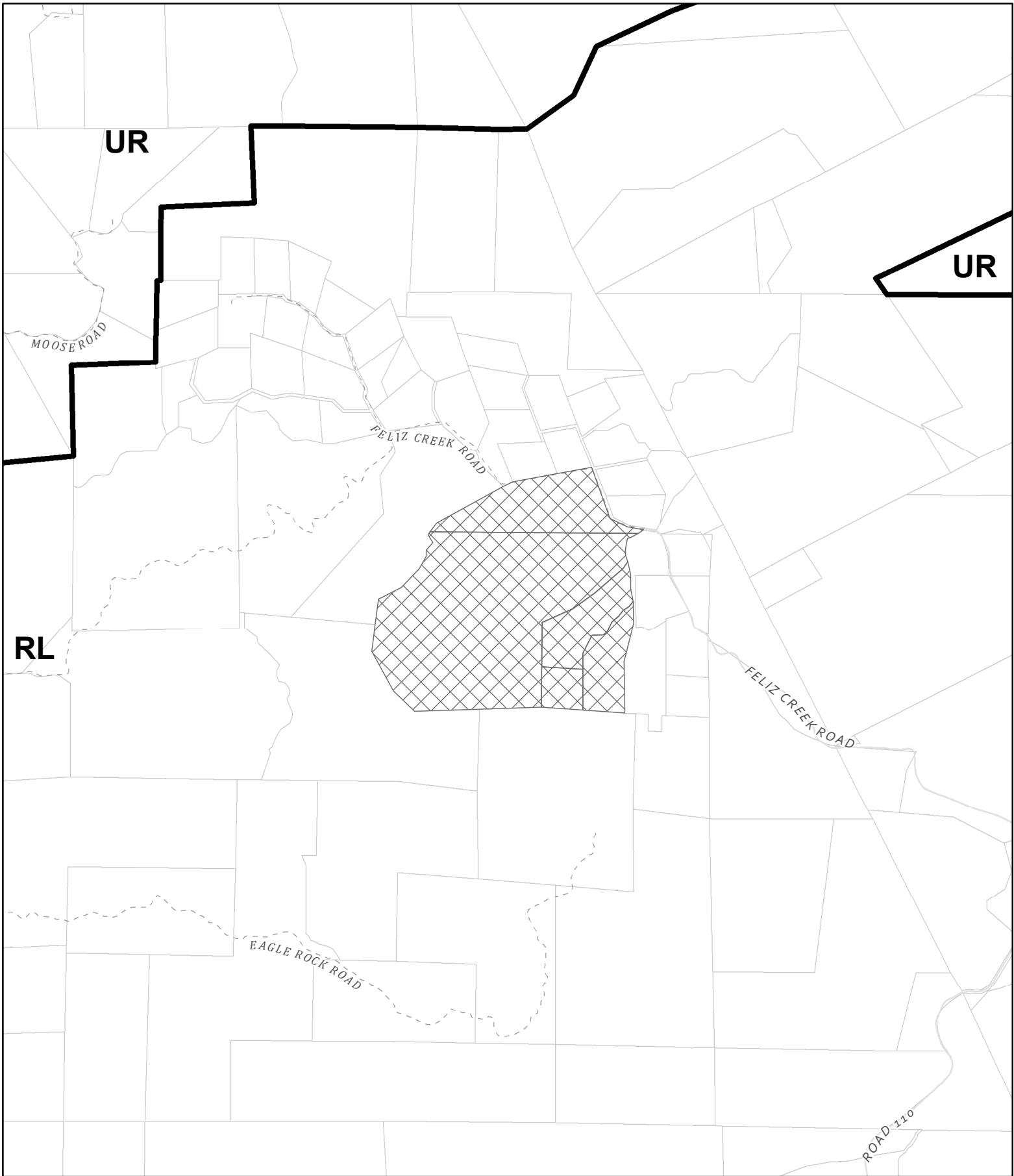
- Public Roads
- Private Roads
- Driveways/Unnamed Roads







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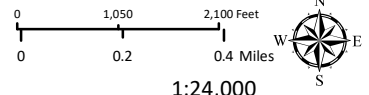
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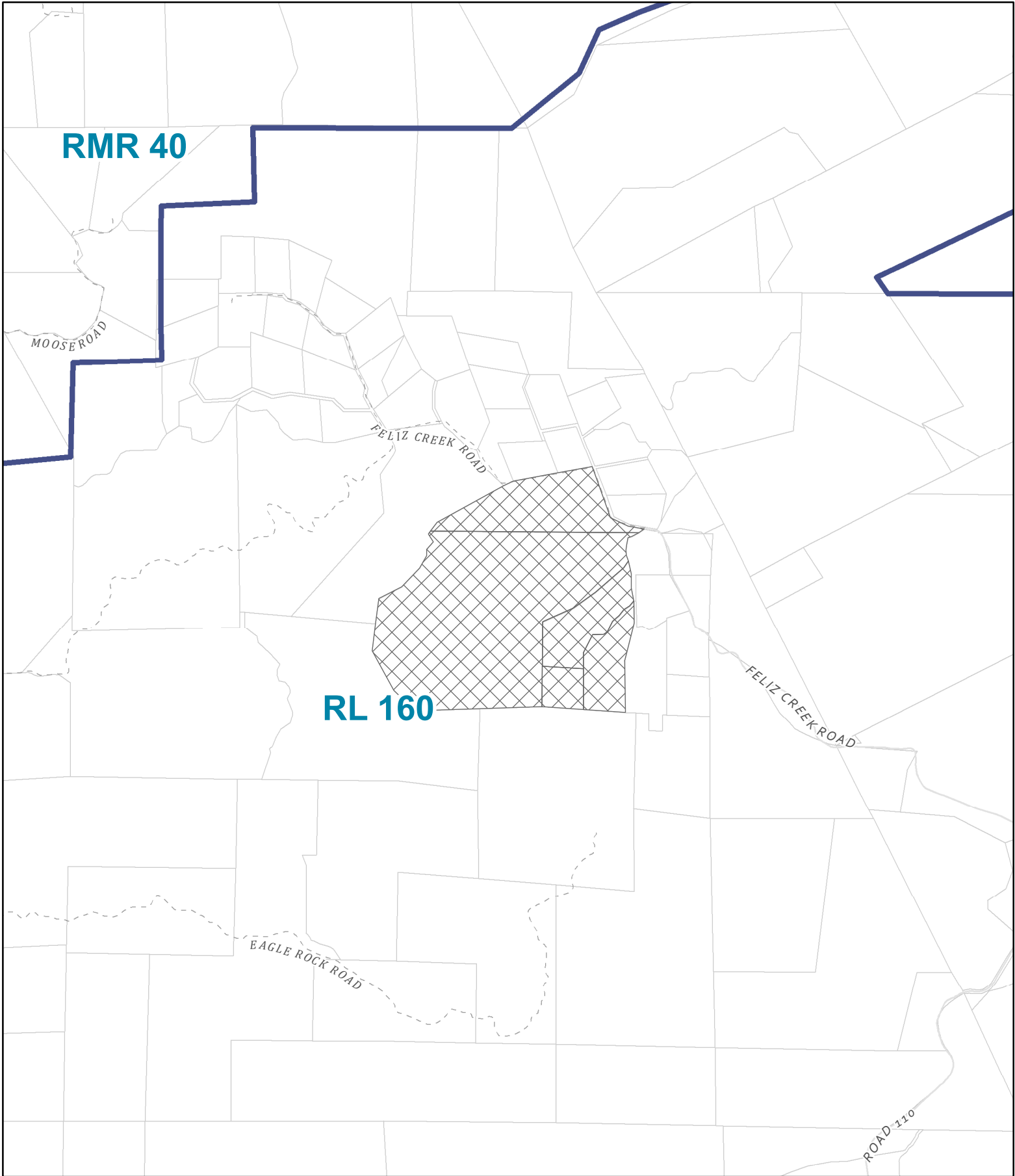
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OWNER: Feliz Creek Vineyards, LLC
APN: Various
APLCT: Steven Amato
AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

-  Zoning Districts
-  Assessors Parcels
-  Public Roads
-  Private Roads



ZONING




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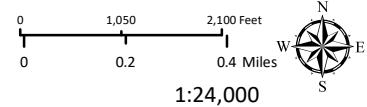


RMR 40

RL 160

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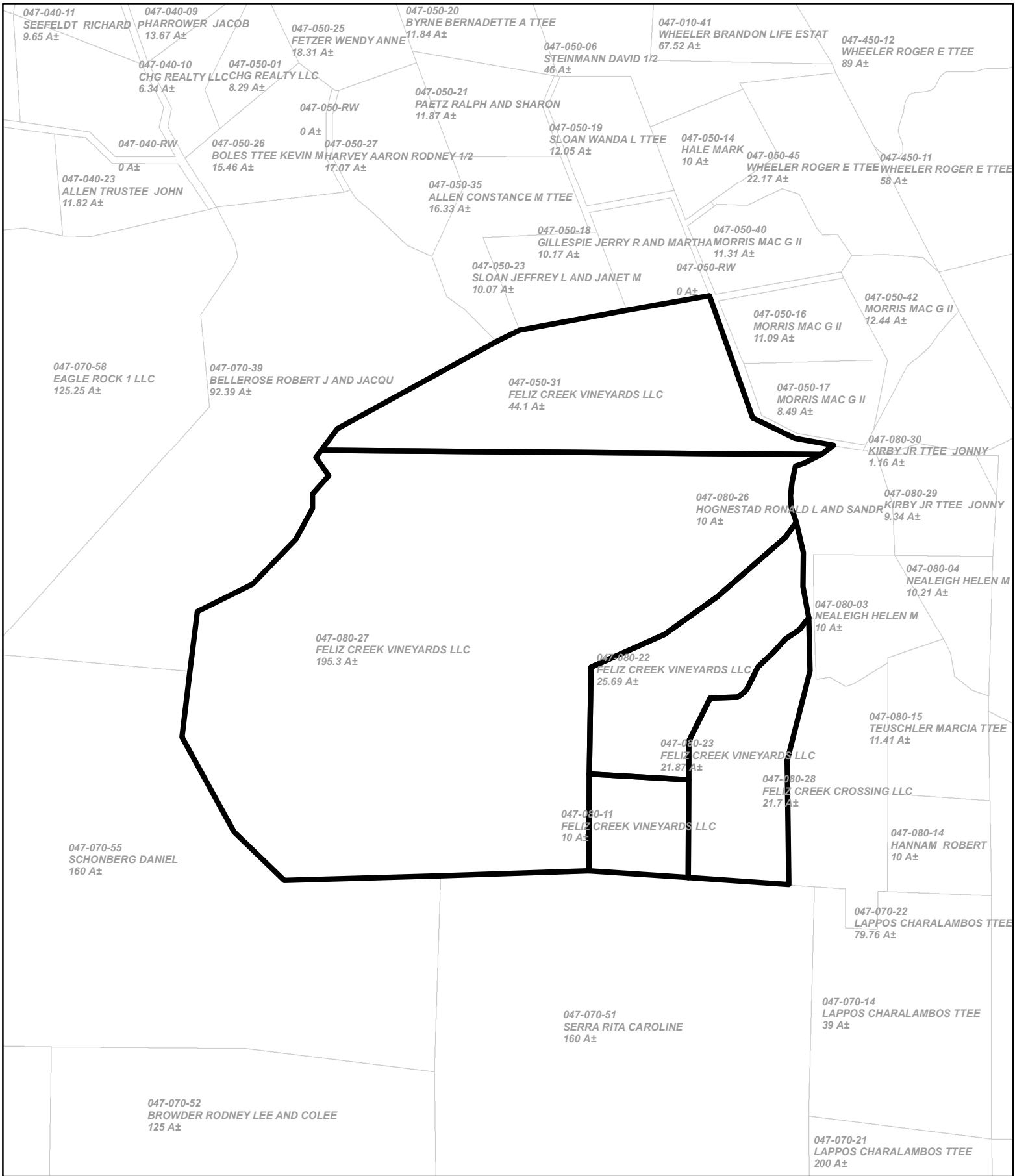
-  Public Roads
-  Private Roads
-  Assessors Parcels



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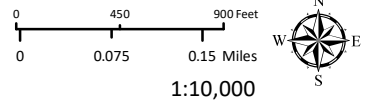
GENERAL PLAN

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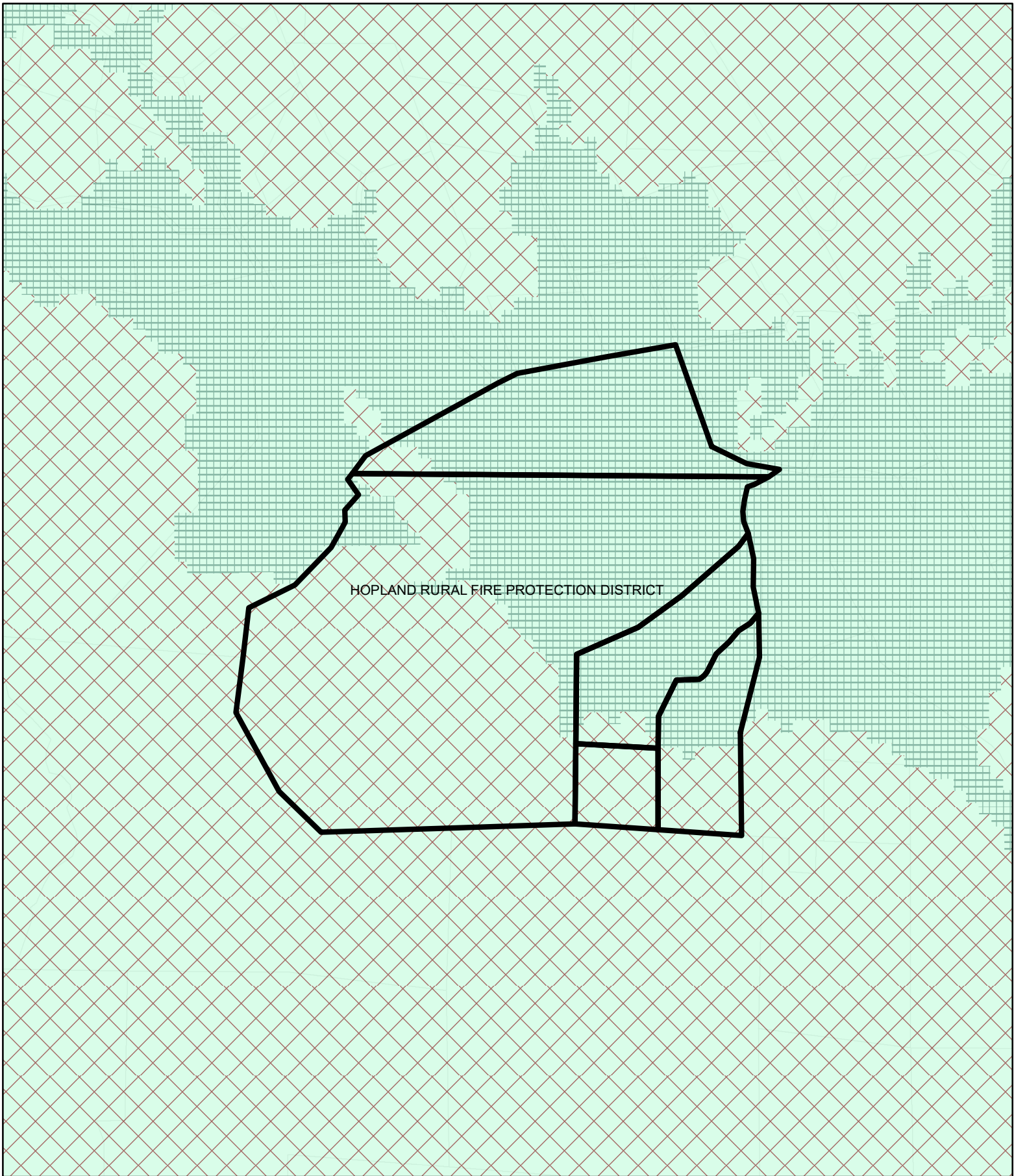
Assessors Parcels



1:10,000





ADJACENT PARCELS

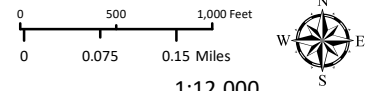
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HOPLAND RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

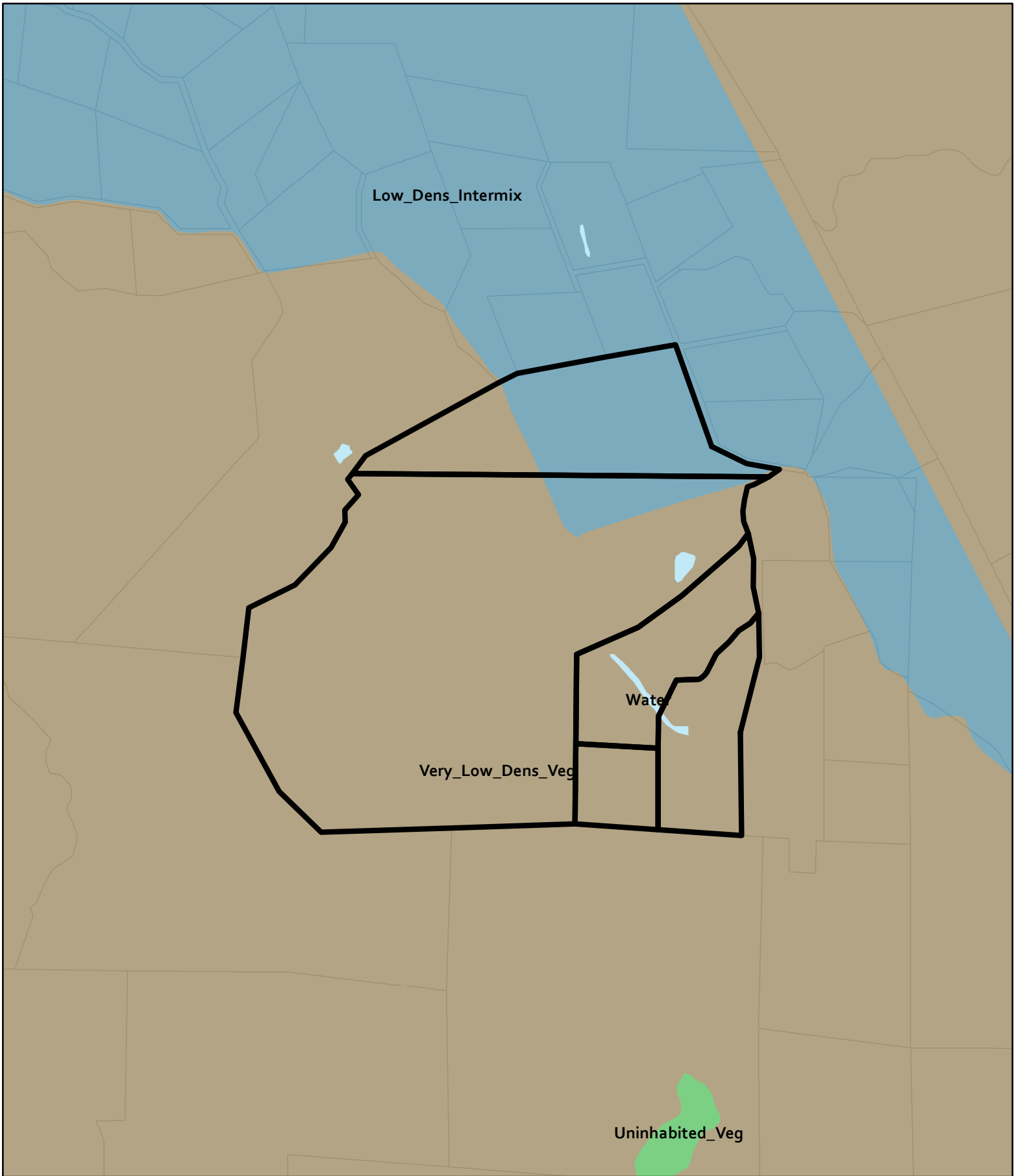
CASE: GP 2024-0002 & R 2024-0002
OWNER: Feliz Creek Vineyards, LLC
APN: Various
APLCT: Steven Amato
AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

-  High Fire Hazard
-  Moderate Fire Hazard
-  County Fire Districts
-  Assessors Parcels




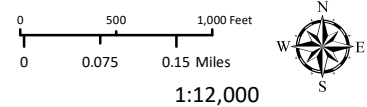
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FIRE HAZARD ZONES & RESPONSIBILITY AREAS
 STATE RESPONSIBILITY AREA

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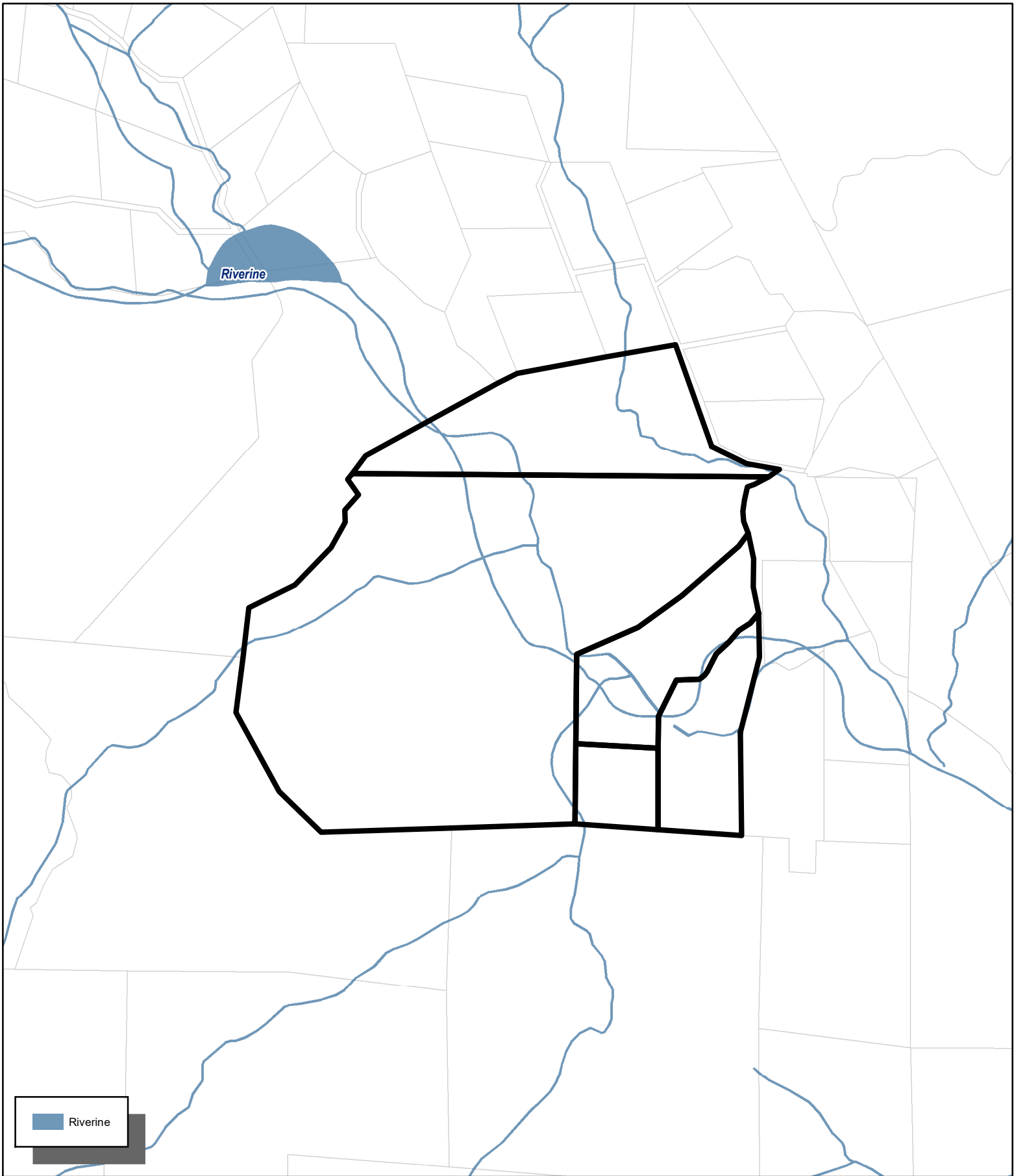
CASE: GP 2024-0002 & R 2024-0002
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APLCT: Steven Amato
AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

 Assessors Parcels



WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

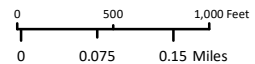
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Riverine

Assessor's Parcels

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AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
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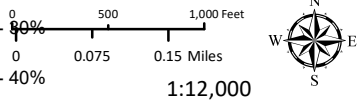
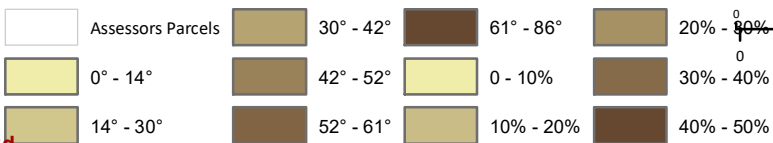
WETLANDS

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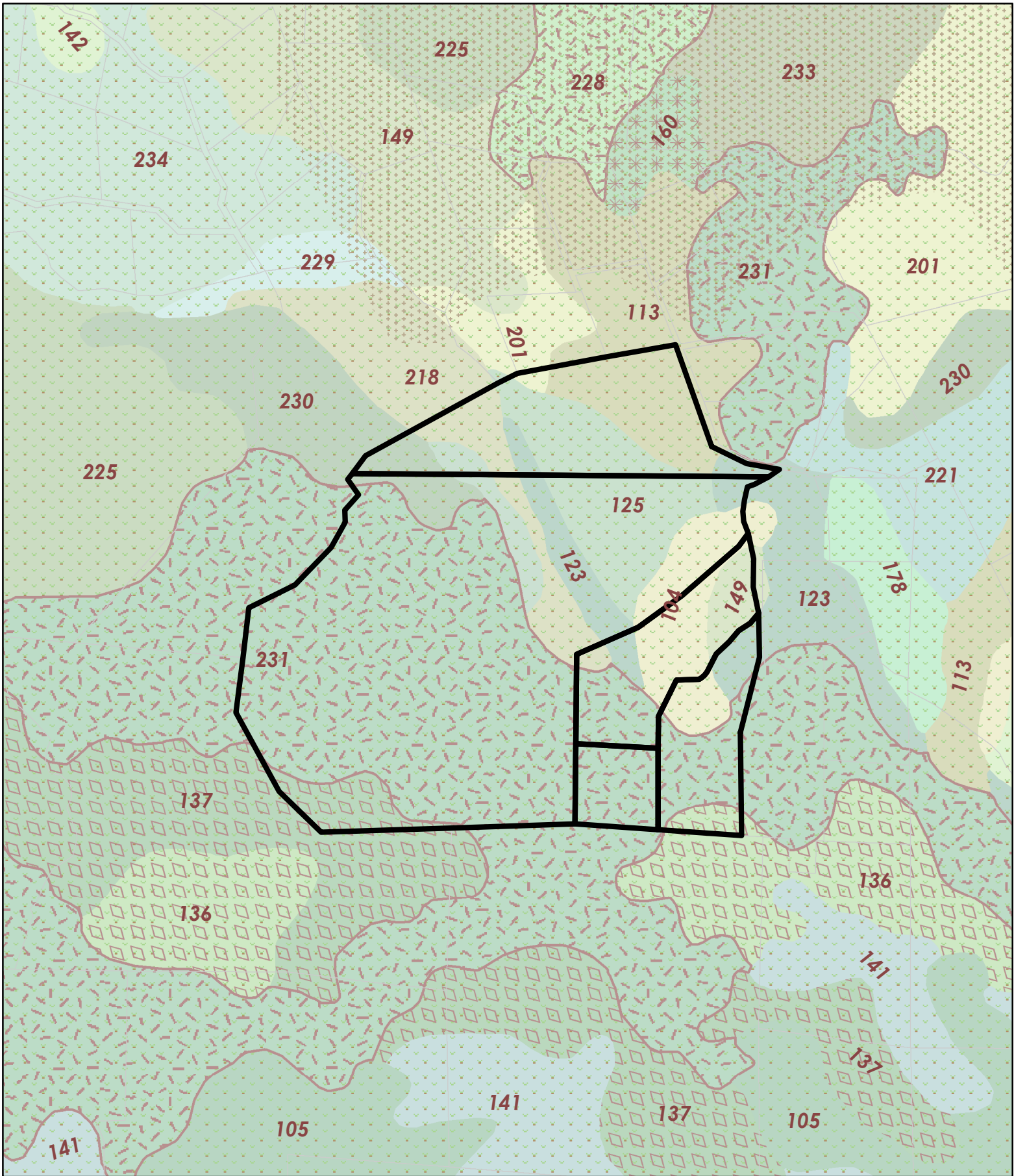
Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, increment P Corp., NPS, NRCAn, Ordnance Survey, © OpenStreetMap contributors, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user community

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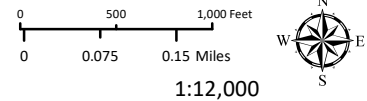
ESTIMATED SLOPE

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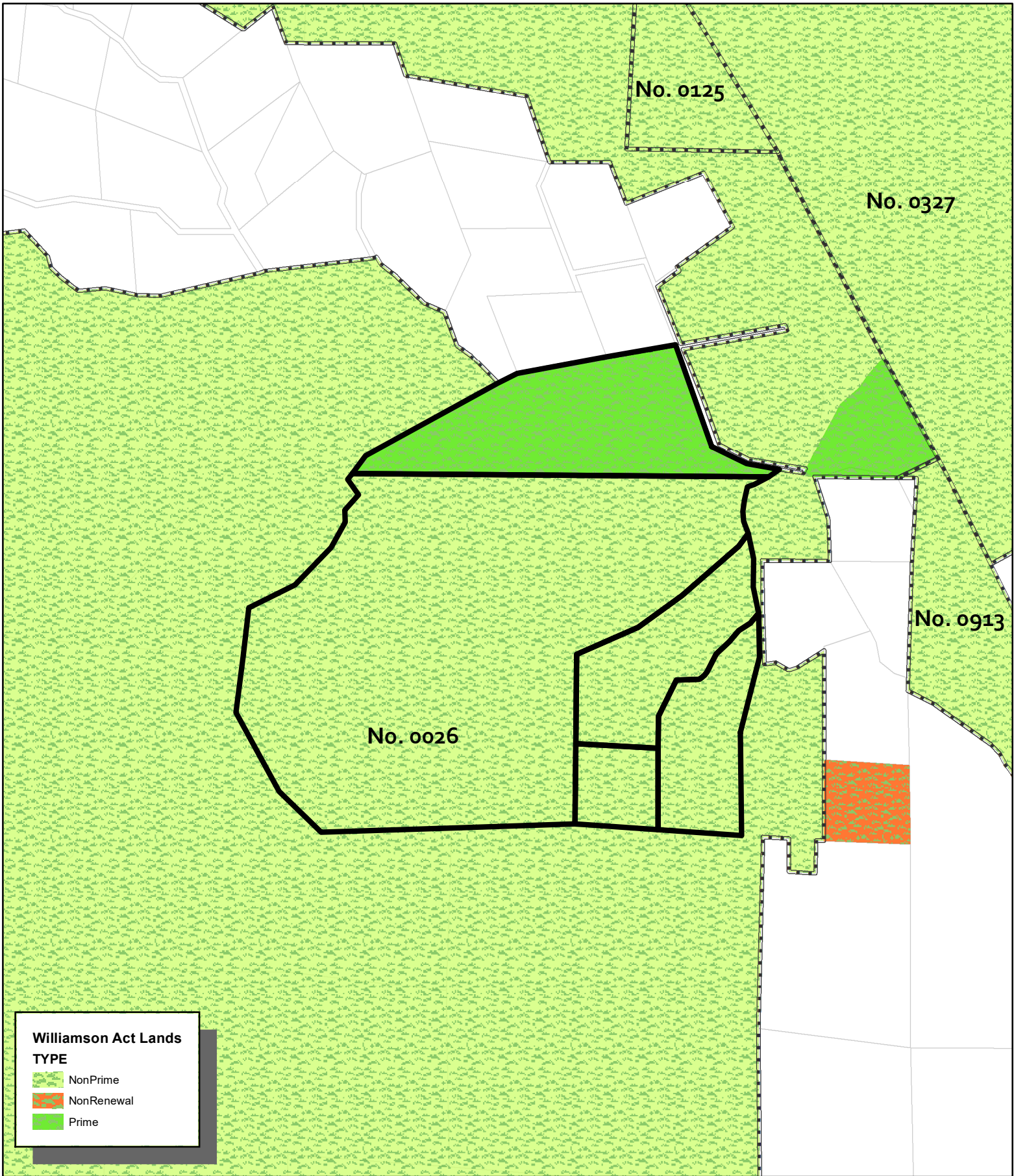
CASE: GP 2024-0002 & R 2024-0002
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AGENT: Jim Ronco Consulting LLC
ADDRESS: 3357, 3565 & 3563 Feliz Creek Rd

-  Assessors Parcels
-  Ultramafic Rock
-  Naturally Occurring Asbestos






EASTERN SOIL CLASSIFICATIONS


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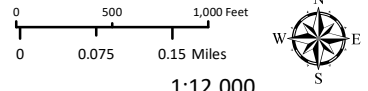


Williamson Act Lands
TYPE

-  NonPrime
-  NonRenewal
-  Prime

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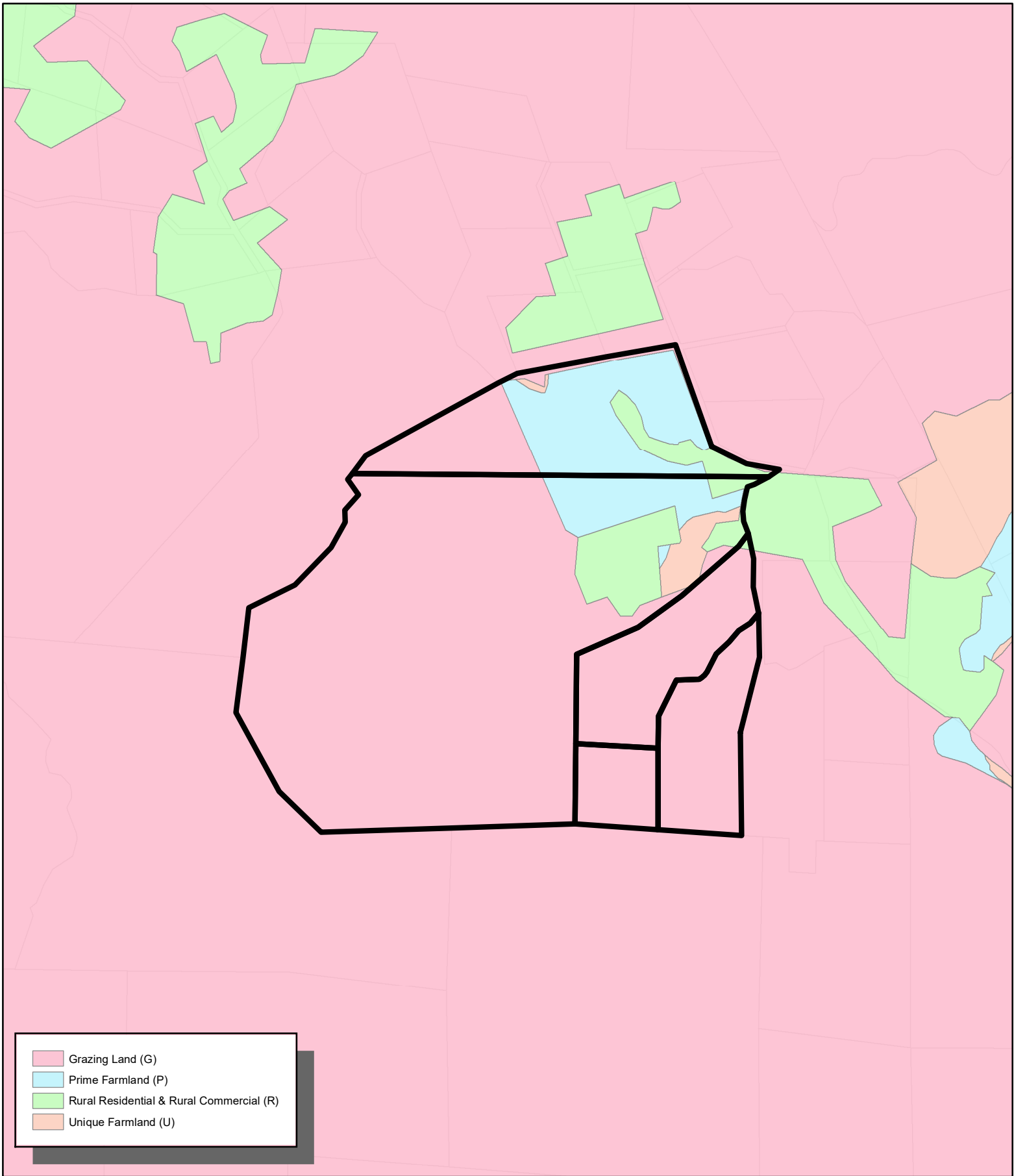
 Assessors Parcels



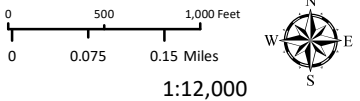
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WILLIAMSON ACT


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	Grazing Land (G)
	Prime Farmland (P)
	Rural Residential & Rural Commercial (R)
	Unique Farmland (U)

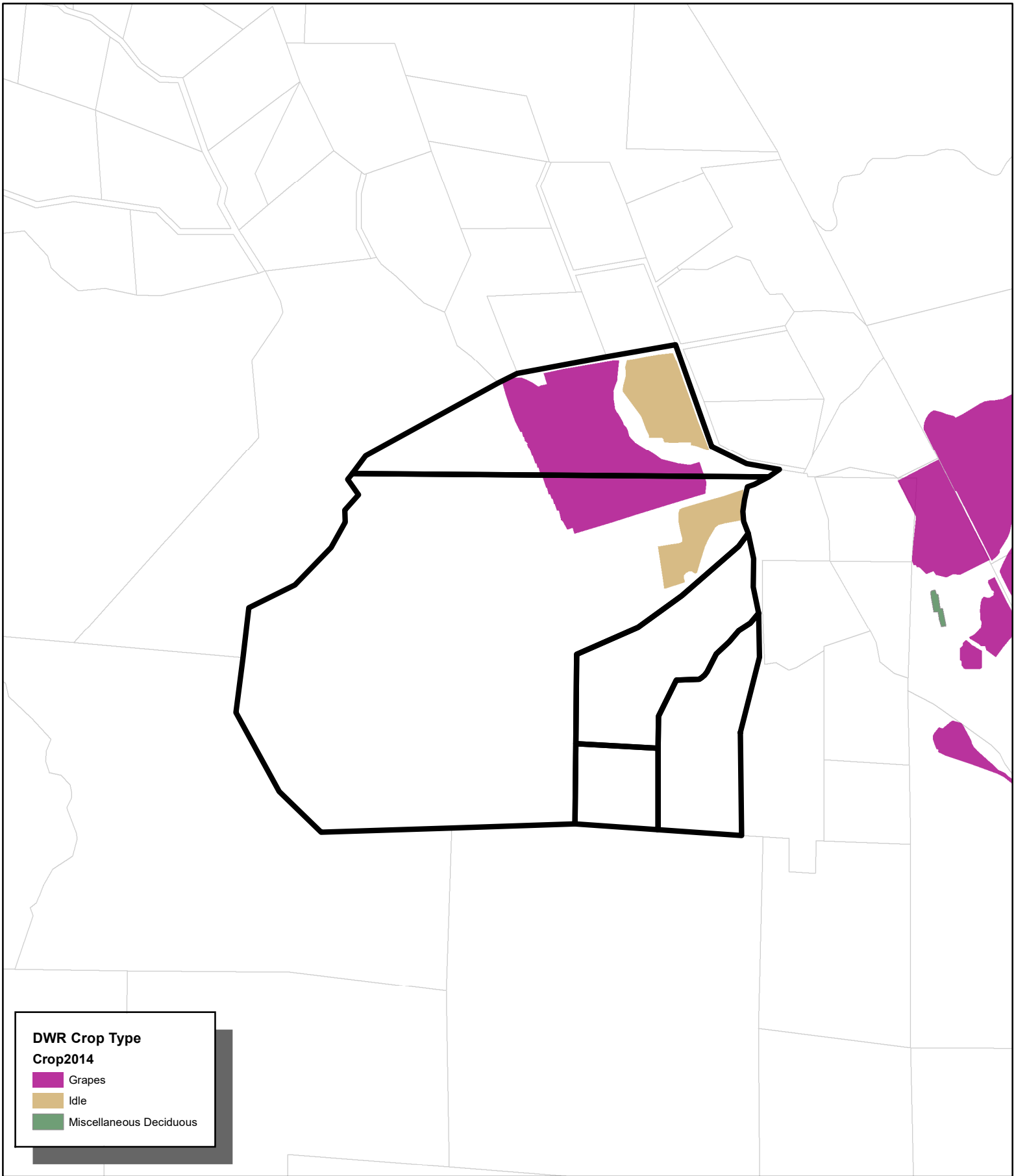


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 Assessors Parcels

IMPORTANT FARMLANDS

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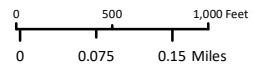


DWR Crop Type
Crop2014

- Grapes
- Idle
- Miscellaneous Deciduous

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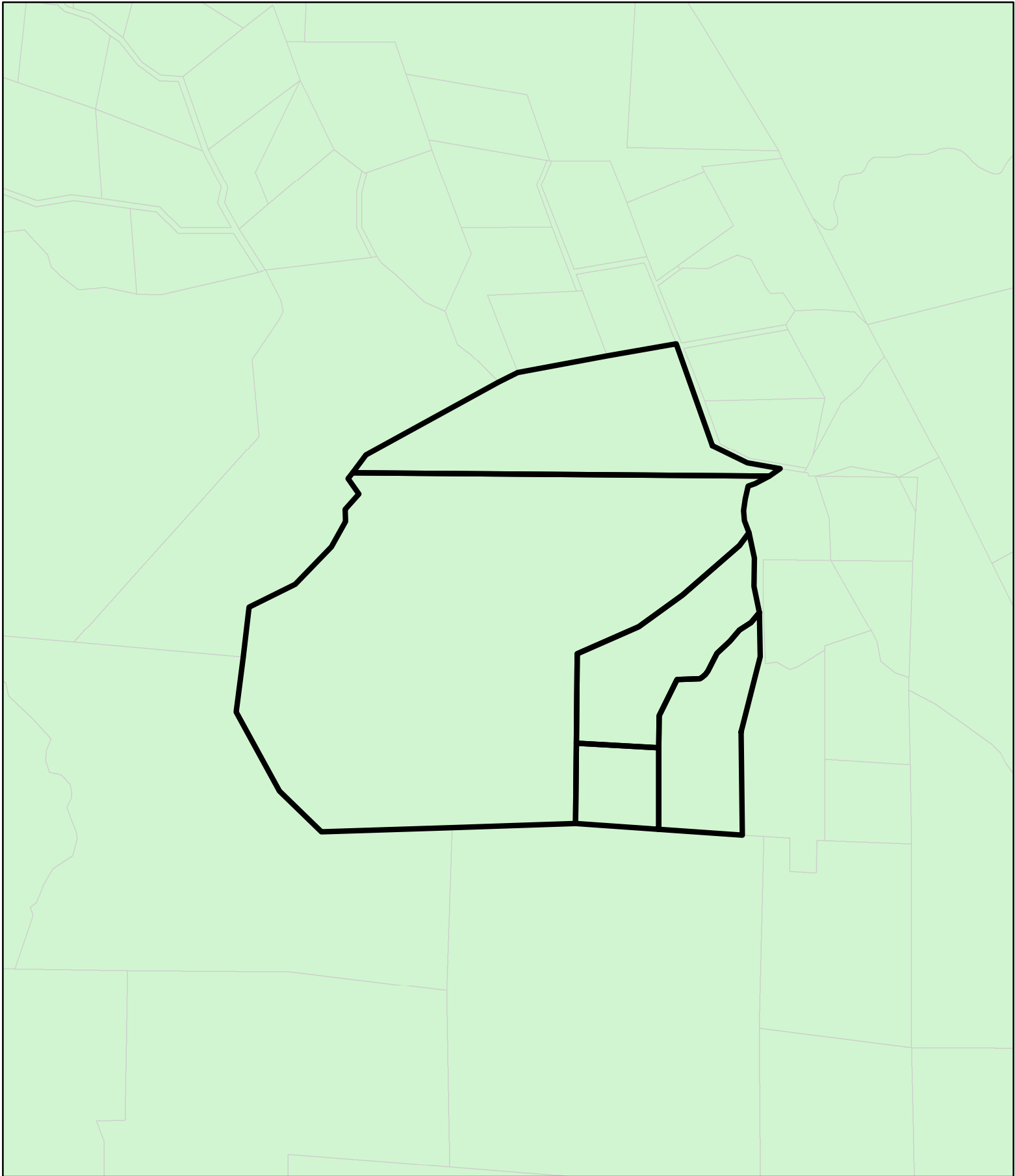
Assessors Parcels




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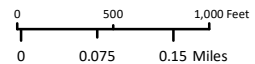
CROP TYPES

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 Assessors Parcels
 Hopland MAC



1:12,000

HOPLAND MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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