



CERTIFICATION OF CEQA EXEMPTION FINDING

Project Title: Baker Bridge Emergency Removal
Project Location: Baker Bridge at Pescadero Creek on the Baker Fire Road in Pescadero Creek County Park. 37.256918, -122.232507

Assessor's Parcel Number: 085-150-080

City and County: Pescadero, San Mateo County

Description of Nature and Purpose of Project:

The San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD), in partnership with San Mateo County Parks Department (County Parks), proposes to remove the damaged Baker Bridge over Pescadero Creek along Baker Fire Road in Pescadero Creek County Park. (Figure 1) To minimize impacts and ensure safety, construction will take place in the dry season after marble murrelet nesting season, a temporary log deck will be constructed over the creek in the work area to protect the underlying creek bed, and the bridge will be cut into smaller pieces for safe transport to an off-site, approved disposal facility.

In July 2021 it was discovered that a tree had fallen across the 100' long by 18' wide bridge, damaging it beyond repair, rendering it no longer functional and a hazard to park users and stream habitat. (Figure 3) The damaged bridge is deteriorating and has a high risk of breaking apart further imminently. Pieces that fall into the creek have a high likelihood of damaging creek spawning habitat for threatened and endangered anadromous fish and could also damage downstream structures (e.g., bridges). Furthermore, Baker Bridge is on a critically important fire access road and the damaged bridge itself blocks emergency crossing of Pescadero Creek. (Figure 2) Removal of the damaged bridge will prevent these potential impacts and allow for interim emergency access until County Parks replaces the bridge.

Name of Person, Board, Commission or Department Proposing to Carry Out Project:

San Mateo Resource Conservation District

Sara Polgar

80 Stone Pine Road, Suite 100

Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

EXEMPT STATUS:

☒ Statutory Exemption: Emergency Project [CEQA State Guidelines, Section 15269(c)]

REMARKS: See next page.

Contact Person:

Sara Polgar

Telephone:

(650) 712-7765

August 18, 2022

Date of Determination:

I do hereby certify that the above determination has been
made pursuant to State and Local requirements.

Sara Polgar

Sara Polgar, Conservation Program Specialist

REMARKS:

The project meets the CEQA criteria for exemption from environmental review under Section 15269 (c) of the CEQA State Guidelines. This statutory exemption describes the following emergency projects:

- (c) Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency. This does not include long-term projects undertaken for the purpose of preventing or mitigating a situation that has a low probability of occurrence in the short-term, but this exclusion does not apply (i) if the anticipated period of time to conduct an environmental review of such a long-term project would create a risk to public health, safety or welfare, or (ii) if activities (such as fire or catastrophic risk mitigation or modifications to improve facility integrity) are proposed for existing facilities in response to an emergency at a similar existing facility.

Baker Bridge is the only bridge crossing over Pescadero Creek within Pescadero Creek County Park to connect the park areas on the north and south sides of the creek. It provides critical access for emergency fire response as well as emergency medical response and park staff patrols through the park property. Not only is the damaged Baker Bridge inaccessible for vehicles, it blocks alternate crossing using a temporary bridge or safely fording the creek at the bridge site.

The risk of fire in the park is high, as demonstrated by the August 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire that started on Butano Ridge along the southern edge of the park. During the CZU Fire, County Parks had to do an emergency repair to another bridge (Trestle Bridge) in the park along Old Haul Road to restore access for fire response vehicles. That bridge had failed prior to 2020 and County Parks had been working on design and permitting for its replacement when the CZU Fire occurred. Immediate access was essential to enable fire response vehicles and equipment hold the north line of the fire at Old Haul Road, and fortunately a construction contractor was able to reuse the existing bridge and restore access within four days.

As with Trestle Bridge, access across Pescadero Creek at Baker Bridge is needed to mitigate an emergency in a catastrophic fire. This meets the requirements under CEQA Guideline Section 15269(c) for an emergency project.

Ideally Baker Bridge could have been removed shortly after it was damaged in 2021, but the removal requires specialized construction equipment that is much larger and heavier than emergency response vehicles and, unlike Trestle Bridge, the Baker Bridge site is very steep. To ensure safe access and working conditions, the bridge removal was delayed to allow for necessary engineering and construction planning as well as timing the work for driest site conditions (i.e. September). Additionally, County Parks had sought to combine the bridge removal and replacement work, but it was not possible to get a replacement bridge soon enough due to supply chain delays.

It is notable that if a fire occurs before Baker Bridge has been removed and fire responders need immediate access along Baker Fire Road, they will have to try to ford Pescadero Creek downstream of where Baker Bridge crosses and then reconnect with the road along the bank on the other side. Without any protection for the creek bed (e.g., temporary bridge or a log deck) this type of crossing could destroy the spawning habitat at this location. Removal of Baker Bridge will give County Parks the ability to use a temporary bridge that can quickly be set up to connect Baker Fire Road over Pescadero Creek if emergency access becomes necessary prior to permanent replacement of the bridge.

In addition to mitigating an emergency in a catastrophic fire, removal of the bridge prevents harm to spawning habitat for threatened and endangered anadromous fish, and downstream structures (e.g.,

bridges). The damaged bridge is deteriorating and has a high risk of breaking apart further. Pieces that fall into the creek could harm water quality and the underlying creek bed and wash downstream this winter causing further damage to habitat as well as structures (e.g., bridges). Additionally, access to, and removal of any pieces that fall into the unprotected creek will be challenging and require work in native, undisturbed areas.

Figure 1. Map of Pescadero Creek County Park. (Red arrow points to Baker Bridge.)

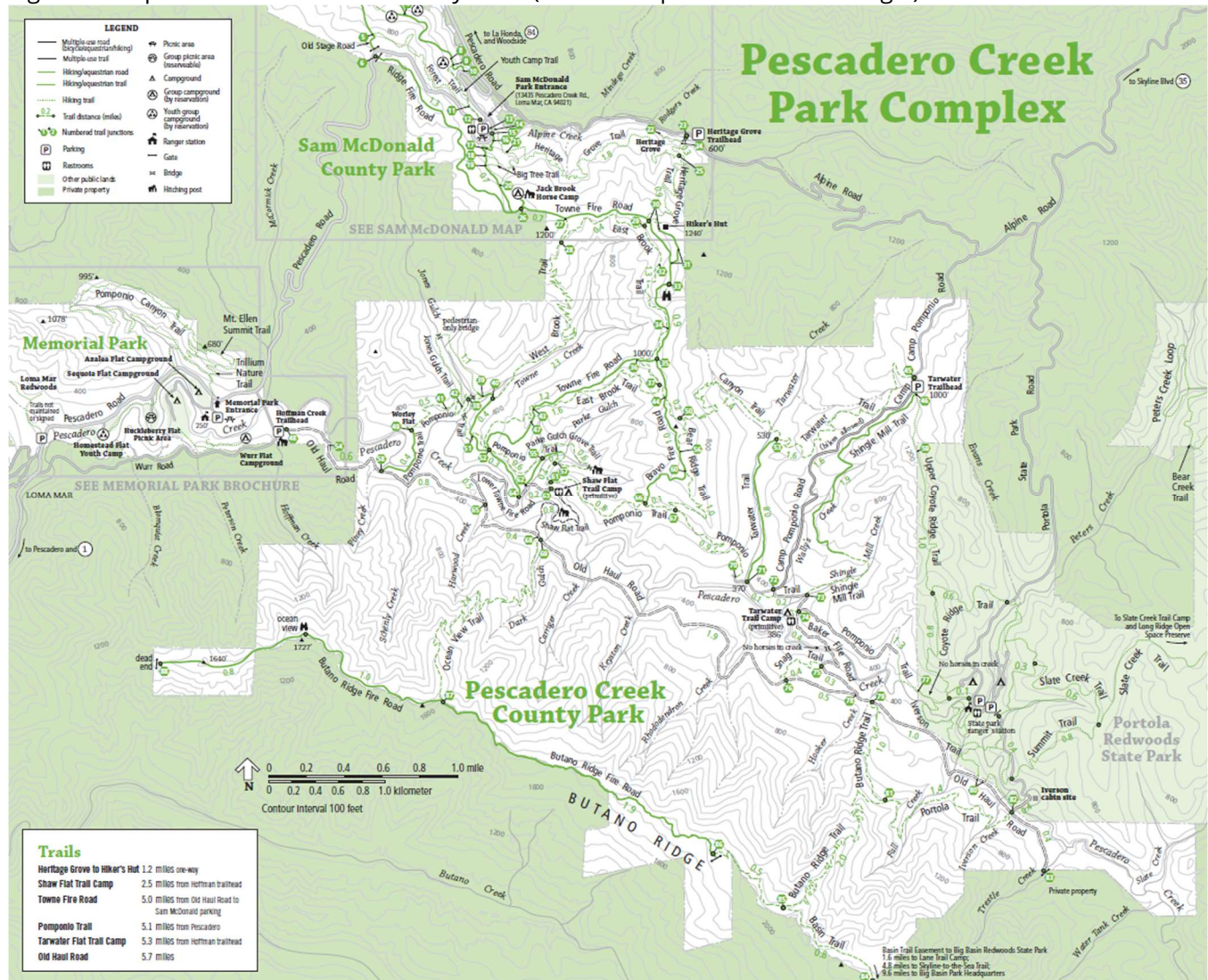


Figure 2. Close up view of Baker Bridge (red arrow) and Baker Fire Road (red line).

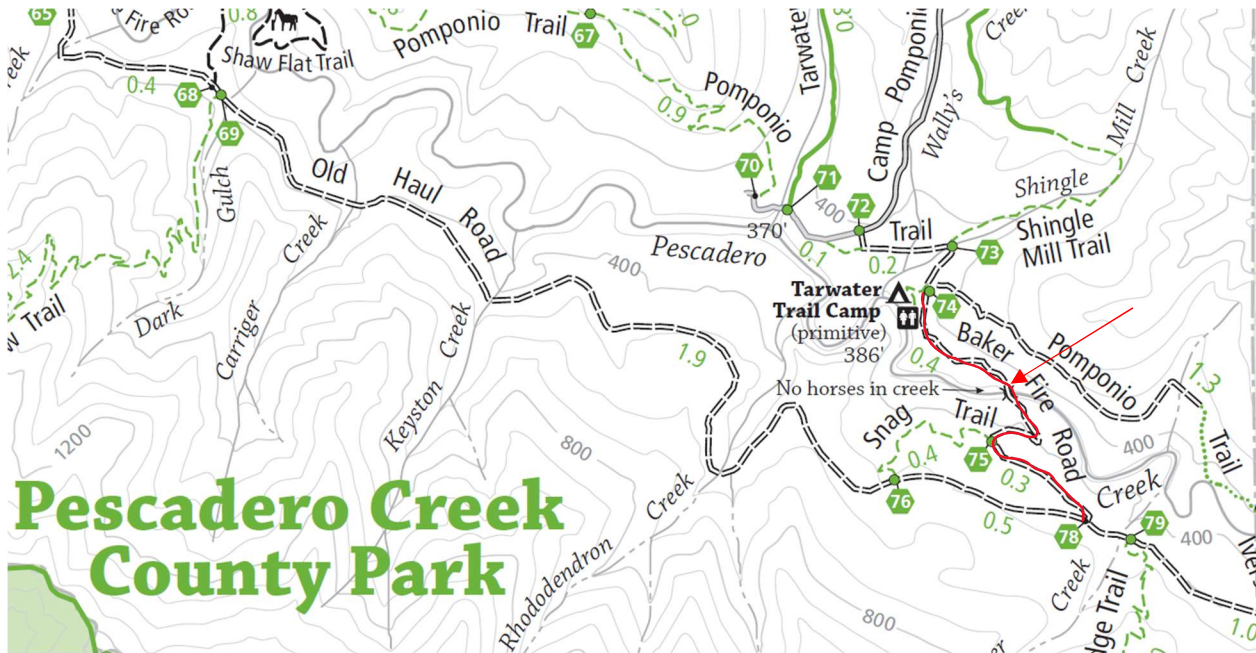


Figure 3. Damaged Baker Bridge

