

# 18.0

## RECREATION

This chapter provides an evaluation of the potential environmental effects of adopting the proposed 2035 San Benito County General Plan (2035 General Plan) on recreational resources. As established in the Notice of Preparation for the proposed 2035 General Plan (see [Appendix A, Notice of Preparation](#)), development and other activities resulting from implementation of the updated 2035 General Plan may result in the physical degradation of the recreational resources available within San Benito County (County).

The following environmental assessment includes a review of recreational facilities potentially affected by the implementation of the 2035 General Plan, including a description of existing recreational amenities and parkland within the project area and the effects that could result from development that would be allowed under the proposed 2035 General Plan. The evaluation is based on comparing existing and future recreation needs in the County according to population growth.

The existing conditions of recreational facilities within the County was determined by a review of the County's 1992 General Plan, the 1995 Conservation and Open Space Element, and through an inventory of recreation facilities, open space lands, and parks managed by federal and state agencies and the County. Potential impacts related to recreational resources, compiled and analyzed based on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessment criteria, were determined by comparing potential project facilities that would be impacted and needed under the 2035 General Plan to the existing inventory of recreation facilities, using recreational demand criteria and guidelines adopted by the County.

## 18.1 SETTING

The County’s environmental and regulatory settings pertaining to recreation are described below are based on the General Plan Background Report (San Benito County 2010b). Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines §15150, this document is incorporated into the Revised Draft EIR (RDEIR) by reference as though fully set forth herein. Where necessary, information originating from the Report has been updated with the best available and most current data, as previously discussed in Section 4.3. The Report is available for download at: [www.sanbenitogpu.com/docs.html](http://www.sanbenitogpu.com/docs.html). Copies of the Report may be viewed during standard business hours (8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.), Monday through Thursday, at the San Benito County Planning and Building Department, 2301 Technology Parkway, Hollister, California 95023. County offices are closed to the public on Fridays.

### 18.1.1 Environmental Setting

The County contains several large and significant parks that are owned and operated by the federal and state governments, including Pinnacles National Park, Hollister Hills State Recreational Vehicle Area, and Fremont Peak State Park. These recreational areas are complemented by several County-owned parks, historical sites, and special use areas that provide important recreational amenities for County residents and visitors. [Table 18-1](#) lists all major parks and recreational facilities in unincorporated County, and their acreages.

**Table 18-1 Existing Park and Open Space Areas in Unincorporated County**

Government Entity	Acres	Total Open Space
<b>Federal</b>		
Pinnacles National Park	26,000	
BLM Land	105,403	
San Justo Reservoir	383	
Land Near San Justo Reservoir	118	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>131,904</i>	<i>91%</i>
<b>State</b>		
Bolado Park	126	
Fremont Peak State Park	244	
San Juan Bautista State Historical Park	NA	

Government Entity	Acres	Total Open Space
Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area	7,100	
Buffer near Hollister Hills	1,690	
Miscellaneous State Lands	2,199	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>11,359</i>	<i>8%</i>
<b>County</b>		
Hernandez Reservoir and Recreation Area	587	
San Benito Historical Park	33	
Veteran's Memorial Park	37	
Other	116	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>733</i>	<i>0.5%</i>
<b>Other Agencies</b>		
Water Agencies	211	
School Districts	113	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>0.2%</i>
<b>County Service Areas (CSA)</b>		
Stonegate (Private/Gates)	5	
Hollister Ranch Estates (Public Access)	1.27	
Oak Creek Subdivision (Public Access)	1.47	
Pacheco Creek Estates (Private/Gated)	2.74	
Quail Hollow Park (Public Access)	2.73	
Rancho Larios (Private/Gated)	3.87	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>17.08</i>	<i>0%</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>114,377</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* San Benito County 2010d; Planning Partners 2012

### **Federal Recreation and Wildlife Areas**

The following is a summary of the land operated by the federal government in San Benito County. This includes one national park (Pinnacles National Park) and several areas managed by the BLM (Clear Creek Management Area, San Benito Mountain Natural Area, a portion of Panoche Hills, Griswold Hills, and a portion of Tumey Hills). All of these facilities, with the

exception of the Clear Creek Management Area, are open to the public and provide information kiosks, restrooms, marked off-road vehicle and trail routes, and passive recreational activities such as wildlife viewing, hiking, hunting, and biking. As noted above, only portions of Panoche Hills and Tumey Hills fall within San Benito County. The majority of these two BLM areas are within Fresno County. There are portions of other BLM lands within San Benito County, although they are smaller tracts of land that are not contiguous. These include Curry Mountain, Coalinga Mineral Springs, Laguna Mountain, and Williams Hill.

### **Pinnacles National Park (NPS)**

Pinnacles National Park is located in the western part of San Benito County and covers approximately 26,000 acres, of which approximately 16,000 acres are protected mountainous recreation area divided by unique rock formations. More than 80 percent of the park is designated a wilderness area, making it part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Connected by many narrow hiking trails, such as the one-mile Bench Trail to the seven-mile North Wilderness Trail, the park has spectacular pinnacles for rock climbing. Located near the San Andreas Fault, the park offers views of the unique geologic formations resulting from years of erosion and weathering of the exposed rocks. The park also contains deep talus caves and narrow gorges created by historic geologic movements. Seismic activity is still frequent in the park, and the U.S. Geological Survey maintains two seismometers to document ongoing activity. Evidence of recent seismic activity can be seen along the faults within the Park because the valley floor shows signs of uplift. The park has also been part of the California Condor Recovery Program since 2003. The program has managed the release of 26 free-flying condors since 2003, the most recent occurring in 2009.

### **Clear Creek Management Area (BLM)**

Clear Creek Management Area is located near the San Benito-Fresno County line and covers approximately 63,000 acres. The Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) has historically been a popular weekend destination available to the public for a variety of recreation, including off-road highway vehicle (OHV) recreation, hunting, backpacking, and sightseeing. However, since May 2008 many public lands have been closed to protect the public from environmental hazards. The unique geologic area includes serpentine soils that contain naturally-occurring asbestos. In 2004 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found elevated levels of airborne asbestos fibers present during various recreation activity surveys and clean-up activities for a Federally-listed mine within the area. As a result, EPA and BLM restrict use of the public lands to reduce the public's asbestos survey during dry months when there is the greatest potential to generate dust. EPA later completed an Asbestos Exposure and Human Health Risk Assessment in early 2008 that determined that all forms of public use on approximately half of the management area (31,000 acres) should be closed to protect public health and safety due to health risks associated with exposure to airborne asbestos.

**San Benito Mountain Natural Area (BLM)**

San Benito Mountain Natural Area is located in the southern part of San Benito County and contains San Benito Mountain (5,241 feet) and approximately 1,500 acres of non-public lands. The area is closed to off-road vehicle use in order to protect the unique plant communities in the area. The area is open to hiking and hunting.

**Panoche Hills (BLM)**

Panoche Hills is located near the southern edge of San Benito County and is bounded by the Panoche Valley and Little Panoche Valley. The area provides passive outdoor recreational activities, including hunting, camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The area is closed to off-road vehicle use. Though the area is primarily accessed via Little Panoche Road through San Benito County, only a small portion of the area is located within San Benito County.

**Griswold Hills (BLM)**

The Griswold Hills consist of approximately 10,000 acres of BLM-administered land located three miles south of Panoche Road and the old mining town of New Idria. Griswold Hills includes a 516-acre wilderness area containing oak-grassland habitat typical of the inner coastal range. Access to the area is only by foot. A foot trail leads from a public parking area and zigzags up the hillside to a ridgetop that sits at an elevation of 2,575 feet. The hills are a popular destination area for hunters seeking game birds, wild pigs, and deer. Over 100 species of birds have been recorded in the area. This area is also popular for observing spring wildflowers.

**Tumey Hills (BLM)**

The Tumey Hills are located east of New Idria Road and consist of Federal lands administered by BLM. The area includes a network of hiking trails and is visible from Interstate 5 in the San Joaquin Valley. The majority of Tumey Hills fall within Fresno County; however, a small portion of the area is within San Benito County. The bare desert hills include valleys, annual grassland, yucca, saltbrush, buckwheat, and highly erodible soils.

**San Justo Reservoir and Recreation Area (BLM)**

The San Justo Reservoir and Recreation Area is located off Union Road south of SR 156 and includes the San Justo Reservoir, a BLM project constructed as part of the Central Valley Project. The area includes approximately 501 acres of recreation and 200 acres of water surface. Recreational activities at the reservoir include boating, fishing, windsurfing, sailing, mountain biking, picnic shelter areas, concessionaires, restrooms, and a recently completed fishing dock. The recreation area is currently (2010) closed to the public due to a zebra mussel infestation.

## **State Parks**

The following is a summary of the parks operated by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in San Benito County. Table 10-3 summarizes the location, acreage, and features of each park.

### **Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA)**

Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) is located approximately six miles south of Hollister and accessed via Cienega Road. SVRA is a motorcycle, four-wheel drive, and all-terrain dune buggy area consisting of an upper and lower ranch covering over 3,200 acres. The area includes 88 miles of bike, off-road, and obstacle course riding trails. The upper ranch includes 800 acres and 24 miles of trails used for four-wheel drive recreation, special events, and fenced motor-cross. The lower ranch includes 2,400 acres and 64 miles of trails used for motorcycles, ATV use, hill climbs, a motor-cross track, and picnicking. The recreation area has group campsites, camping facilities, hiking trails, and a visitor center.

### **Fremont Peak State Park**

Fremont Peak State Park is located 11 miles south of San Juan Bautista along San Juan Canyon Road. The park provides access to a one-mile hiking loop to Fremont Peak (3,169 feet). The peak offers a panoramic view of the surrounding scrub oak woodlands, Manzanita, Toyon, and grassland habitats, Gabilan range, San Benito Valley, Monterey Bay, and the Santa Lucia Mountains. The park includes an astronomical observatory that houses a 30-inch reflecting telescope, the largest available in the County for public use. The park also provides picnic sites, camping, and wildlife viewing areas.

## **County Parks and Open Space Areas**

The following is a summary of the four larger parks owned and/or operated by San Benito County, as well as several smaller subdivision park areas listed under County Service Area parks.

### **Bolado Park**

Bolado Park is located near Tres Pinos and east of Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area. The park encompasses approximately 126 acres and is the site of the annual San Benito County Fair. More information on the County fairground facilities is provided below under San Benito County Fairgrounds.

### **Hernandez Reservoir**

Hernandez Reservoir is located in the southern part of the County. The reservoir was constructed in the early 1960s and impounds water from San Benito River. It holds approximately 18,500 acre-feet of water for storage and flood control and has a capacity of 30,000 acre-feet. The dam is operated and maintained by the San Benito County Water District (SBCWD). Approximately 587 acres of land surround the reservoir.

### **San Benito Historical Park**

San Benito Historical Park is located off Airline Highway near Bolado Park. The historical park encompasses approximately 33 acres and several historic homes. These homes are open to the public through a site tour. There are 33 picnic areas, multiple group sites, and a historical park bridge. The park also includes eight historical structures, many of which have been restored by the San Benito County Historical Society.

### **Veteran's Memorial Park**

Veteran's Memorial Park is located on the northwest corner of Memorial Drive and Hillcrest Road. The park encompasses approximately 37 acres and is the most heavily used park in San Benito County. The park has a skate park, three tennis courts, two adult softball fields, four Little League fields, and a lighted regulation-sized hardball field. The park also has four picnic shelters and a BMX track that runs adjacent to the skate park and tennis courts.

### **County Service Areas (CSA)**

The following is a summary of the parks managed by the San Benito County Public Works Department, which includes several small park areas managed by County Service Districts (CSA). There are approximately 30 CSAs managed throughout the County; however, only a few provide publicly-accessible recreation areas.

#### **Quail Hollow Park**

Quail Hollow Park is located near Enterprise Road in the Quail Hollow Subdivision. The park is a small, 2.73-acre neighborhood park.

#### **Oak Creek Park**

Oak Creek Park is located near Enterprise Road in the Oak Creek Subdivision. The park is a small, 1.47-acre neighborhood park.

## **Other Recreational Facilities**

### **Bikeways**

In December 2009 the San Benito County Council of Governments (SBCOG) adopted the *San Benito County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*. According to the Plan, the County has over 10 miles of bikeways. The majority of the bikeway segments are located in Hollister. Only a half-mile of bikeway is located within the unincorporated County along Southside Road. The existing bikeway network consists of approximately two miles of bike paths and eight miles of bike routes. There are no Class III bike routes (routes that provided shared use with pedestrians or motor vehicles) in the County. In December 2009 the San Benito County Council of Governments adopted the San Benito County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which proposes an additional 25 miles of Class I multi-use bikeways, approximately 29 miles of Class II bike lanes, and approximately 41 miles of Class III bike routes, for a total of 95 miles of bikeways within the County over the next 20 years. The San Juan Highway Bike Lanes project, constructed in 2010, includes a three-mile bike lane along both sides of San Juan Highway. The lanes begin at US 101 near Anzar High School and continue to First Street in San Juan Bautista.

### **Trails**

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historical Trail is a component of the National Landscape Conservation System. This 1,210 mile historic route begins in Nogales, Arizona, and ends in San Francisco, California. A portion of the trail traverses the northwestern part of San Benito County, south of US 101 and SR 156 near San Juan Bautista. The trail parallels a portion of US 101 until it reaches Santa Clara County, where the historic trail corridor splits. The trail also passes through several sites of interest within the County, including the San Juan Canyon Historic District, the Mission San Juan Bautista, and the San Juan Bautista State Historic Park.

### **Public and Private Golf Courses**

There are two public golf courses in San Benito County and two semi-private golf courses at a resort that accept public play. These courses include:

- San Juan Oaks Golf Club (18 hole)
- Bolado Park Golf Course (9 hole)
- Ridgemark Golf and Country Club Gabilan Course (18 hole)
- Ridgemark Golf and Country Club Diablo Course (18 hole)

While the Ridgemark Golf and Country Club courses are semi-private, they alternate between offering private and public use. The resort also includes a clubhouse, guest cottages, and six lighted tennis courts. All golf courses are located in or near Hollister.

### **Private Recreational Facilities**

There are several private recreation facilities in San Benito County. These include private camping, horseback riding, and hunting facilities.

### **San Benito County Fairgrounds**

The San Benito County Fairgrounds are located at Bolado Park, seven miles southeast of Hollister. The fairgrounds hosts weddings, family picnics, dinners, dances, and conferences. In June the fairgrounds hosts the San Benito County Saddle Horse Rodeo. During the fall it hosts the San Benito County Fair. The facility includes:

- A trailer camping area, open year-round
- Pavilion Hall, which includes 12,000 square feet of indoor areas and up to 816 seats used for weddings and receptions
- The Blue Room with 128 seats, used for reception events
- An outdoor patio area of 11,544 square feet
- A 15-acre picnic area
- A 2,733 seated grandstand track arena

### **Museums**

The County owns and operates the San Benito County Historical Society Museum in Hollister. The museum is leased to the San Benito County Historical Society, which established the museum in 1974.

## **18.1.2 Regulatory Setting**

### **Federal**

- **National Trail Systems Act of 1968.** The National Trails Systems Act of 1968 established a nationwide system of interstate riding and hiking trails. To support this legislation, to protect existing trails, and to provide new trails, the California Department of Parks and Recreation prepared a *State Recreational Trails Plan* as a guide for all state agencies that provide and manage recreational trails, last updated in June 2002.

## State

- **General Plan Law Regarding Open Space Land Plan (Government Code § 65560–65570).** This body of general plan law requires every County and city to prepare and adopt an open space element as a mandatory element of its general plan.
- **California Recreational Trails Act of 1978 (Public Resources Code §§ 5070–5077.8).** The preparation of the *California Recreational Trails Plan* was supported under the California Recreational Trails Act, authorized by the State Legislature in 1978. This law also requires that during development of the general plan, counties shall consider trail-oriented recreational uses and such demands in developing specific open-space programs.
- **Open Space Zoning (State Government Code §§ 65910–65912).** Section 65910 through 65912 of California planning law requires every city and county to prepare and adopt an open space zoning ordinance, consistent with the open space element of its general plan.
- **Mitigation Fee Act (Government Code § 66000 et seq.).** The Mitigation Fee Act, as part of State Planning Law, permits local jurisdictions to charge fees to mitigate impacts of development including, but not limited to, parks and other recreational facilities. Fees must bear a reasonable relationship to the developers' fair share of the cost of the facilities and must be used solely for the purposes for which they were collected.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 1685.** SB 1685 authorized open space districts to levy special assessments for open space purposes. The enabling legislation for regional open space districts is in the California Public Resources Code. Pursuant to the Code, regional park and open space districts are formed when three or more jurisdictions, together with any parcel of the city or county territory, organize and form a contiguous area with the intent for the designated space to serve as a park for recreational needs.
- **Open Space Easement Act of 1974 (Government Code § 51070 et seq.).** This Act allows cities and counties to acquire open space easements and requires the easements to remain in perpetuity, or alternatively, for at least ten years.
- **Conservation Easement Act of 1979 (Civil Code § 815-816).** The Conservation Easement Act enables cities, counties, districts, and non-profit organizations to acquire perpetual easements for the conservation of agricultural land and open space, or for historic preservation. Unlike open space easements, there is no procedure for non-renewal of conservation easements, and there is no expiration date on the easement.
- **Quimby Act (Government Code § 66477).** The Quimby Act, as part of the Subdivision Map Act, permits local jurisdictions to require the dedication of land and/or the payment of in-lieu fees solely for park and recreation purposes. Lands dedicated and fees collected

pursuant to the Quimby Act may be used only for developing new, or rehabilitating existing, park or recreational facilities.

## **Regional**

- **Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).** The MTP includes proposed transportation projects and programs from the region's member agencies. Projects included in the MTP are based on need, an evaluation of alternatives, and a plan to satisfy the need. The MTP is also used to promote alternative modes of transportation, including bicycling and walking, to help relieve future congestion.

## **County**

- **1992 General Plan.** The *San Benito County General Plan Land Use Element* (1992), *Transportation and Circulation Element* (1994), and *Open Space and Conservation Element* (1995) contain various goals and policies that support the development of recreational facilities and open space protection.
- **2010 Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan.** The Plan provides additional goals and objectives to facilitate the development of parks and recreational facilities within the County.
- **2009 San Benito County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan.** The Plan guides the future development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the County. The plan was developed with input from the Council of San Benito County Governments, San Benito County, the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and members of the public. The purpose of the plan is to expand existing networks, connect gaps, address constrained areas, and provide greater connectivity within the County.

## **18.2 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The recreation analysis evaluates whether implementation of the proposed population growth and urban and other development that would occur from total buildout under the 2035 General Plan could result in adverse effects to recreation facilities.

### **18.2.1 Significance Criteria**

As set forth in Appendix G to the State CEQA Guidelines, Section XIV, Recreation, the following criteria have been established to quantify the level of significance of an adverse effect being evaluated pursuant to CEQA. The numeration of each criterion below corresponds to the questions in the checklist in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (e.g., XV.a, XV.b). An impact would exceed a significance threshold if the 2035 General Plan would:

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. (XV.a)
- Include recreational facilities or require the construction of expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment. (XV.b)

### **18.2.2 Analysis Methodology**

The recreation evaluation relies on the review of recreational resources and facilities listed above that potentially may be affected by the adoption of the 2035 General Plan and the development allowed under the 2035 General Plan. The evaluation relies on comparing projected development conditions in 2035 to existing conditions using recreation metrics, such as providing a minimum of five acres per 1,000 residents as the level of service ratio. The recreation evaluation addresses recreation impacts based on CEQA assessment criteria.

As discussed in Section 4.5.7, Potential Growth Scenarios, the EIR analysis takes into account the two growth scenarios: Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. For this programmatic level of analysis, there will be no difference in the impacts that would result from these two growth scenarios because the County would apply the 2035 General Plan policies, including additional policies from mitigation measures contained in the certified EIR, addressing recreational impacts equally in approving development, regardless of location. In addition to the programmatic review provided in this analysis, it is anticipated that site-specific analysis of impacts, including project-level environmental review, to recreational resources would be required for particular development proposals under 2035 General Plan that may be considered in the future.

### **18.2.3 Environmental Impacts**

The following discussion examines the potential recreation impacts of the proposed project based on the impact threshold criteria described above. [Table 18-2](#) summarizes 2035 General Plan policies that would mitigate environmental impacts associated with aesthetic and visual resources, including an explanation of how the policy would avoid or reduce impacts.

**Table 18-2 2035 General Plan Goals and Policies that Mitigate Recreation Resources Impacts**

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<b>Land Use Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal LU-1: Countywide Growth and Development</b></p> <p>To maintain San Benito County’s rural character and natural beauty while providing areas for needed future growth.</p>	<p>Improves recreational opportunities by focusing on maintaining the County’s rural character and areas of natural beauty, many of which comprise important recreational areas, while also providing areas for future growth.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>Policy LU-1.3: Future Development Timing</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure that future development does not outpace the ability of either the County or other public/private service providers to provide adequate services and infrastructure. The County shall review future development proposals for their potential to reduce the level of services provided to existing communities or place economic hardships on existing communities, and the County may deny proposals that are projected to have these effects.</p>	<p>Supports orderly, well-planned, and timely growth consistent with existing infrastructure, services, and public facilities. This reduces impacts related to the deterioration of existing facilities such as recreational amenities in order that the level of services provided to the existing communities does not deteriorate by simultaneously planning for expanded and new facilities as they are needed to accommodate increasing recreation demand.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy LU-1.7: Community Plans</b></p> <p>The County should consider the development and adoption of Community Plans for existing unincorporated communities in order to maintain/establish a community identity, coordinate traffic and circulation improvements, promote infill development where public services are already in demand, identify recreational needs and, ensure coordinated development.</p>	<p>Reduces recreational impacts related to overuse due to lack of facilities in areas where growth occurs, and is likely to continue to occur, by promoting development where existing public services are available and by identifying recreational needs during the proposed development projects to ensure recreation needs are met.</p>	<p>1</p>

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact REC-#</b>
<p><b>Goal LU-4: Residential Development</b></p> <p>To encourage variety in new unincorporated residential development while also providing incentives for clustered residential as a means to protect valuable agricultural and natural resources.</p>	<p>Sets the overall goal to cluster residential development in order to protect agricultural and natural resources, many of which provide recreational space.</p>	1,2
<p><b>Policy LU-4.6: Clustered Residential Program</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to encourage the clustering of residential uses and the use of creative site planning techniques to promote preservation of agricultural land and open space areas.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to important agricultural and open space lands, many of which are recognized as important recreational resources, by encouraging the clustering of residential uses.</p>	1,2
<p><b>Goal LU-9: City Fringe Areas</b></p> <p>To ensure that planning and development approvals within city fringe areas are coordinated between the County and the Cities in order to ensure future growth in these areas is orderly, efficient, and has sufficient and necessary public facilities and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Ensures orderly development in city fringe areas in order that efficient, sufficient, and necessary public facilities such as recreational facilities are in place prior to new development.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy LU-9.1: Orderly City Expansion</b></p> <p>The County shall support the orderly expansion of urban uses within the spheres of influence of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, recognizing that the Cities have primary responsibility for determining the type, intensity, and timing of future development in these areas.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to recreational resources in the County by supporting the orderly expansion of urban uses within the spheres of influence of the two cities in the County, helping both the cities and County plan for future recreational improvements.</p>	1
<b>Natural and Cultural Resources Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal NCR-1: Open Space</b></p> <p>To preserve and enhance valuable open space lands that provide wildlife habitat and conserve natural and visual resources of San Benito County.</p>	<p>Limits impacts to recreational resources in the County that also are open space lands.</p>	1,2

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<p><b>Policy NCR-1.1: Integrated Network of Open Space</b></p> <p>The County shall maintain an integrated network of open space lands that support natural resources, recreation, tribal resources, wildlife habitat, water management, scenic quality, and other beneficial uses.</p>	<p>Maintenance of an integrated network of open space lands would reduce potential impacts on recreational resources in the County.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>Policy NCR-1.2: Conservation Easements</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage clustering of residential uses and creative site planning in new development to preserve areas of contiguous open space.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to recreational resources by encouraging the clustering of residential uses to preserve large areas of contiguous open space.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>Policy NCR-1.3: Open Space Overlay District</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to protect and the rural landscape and implement open space policies for: public health, safety, and welfare; continued agricultural uses; scenic viewscape preservation, including scenic highway corridors; park and recreation uses; conservation of significant natural resources; the containment and definition of limits to urbanization; and the preservation of natural habitat for threatened and/or endangered plant and animal species.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to recreational resources by implementing open space policies in order to protect park and recreation uses.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Goal NCR-3: Recreational Resources</b></p> <p>To develop and maintain a comprehensive system of parklands and protected public recreational areas that meet both the active and passive recreation needs of all age groups.</p>	<p>The maintenance of a comprehensive parks system would protect existing public recreational areas and help meet future recreation needs.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.1: Comprehensive Park System</b></p> <p>The County shall continue to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain a comprehensive system of parkland and recreational facilities that include active and passive recreation for a wide range of users.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to recreational resources in the County by expanding the recreational resources available through a comprehensive parkland system that provide recreation facilities to a wide range of users.</p>	<p>1,2</p>

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.2: Park Ratio Standard</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage and support the development of recreational facilities to serve unincorporated communities at a ratio of five acres of recreation area per 1,000 persons.</p>	<p>Requires a parkland standard is applied to all new development projects to ensure that adequate recreational lands are created for future urban growth.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.3: Private Recreation near Parks</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage the development of private recreational uses near existing County, State, and Federal parks.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to recreational resources by encouraging public parklands to be complemented by private recreational uses.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.4: Interagency Coordination</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate the development of regional parks in cooperation with local, State and Federal agencies, and shall seek to establish new partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities in the County.</p>	<p>Requires the County to coordinate the development of regional parks with local, state, and federal agencies, thereby reducing impacts to recreational resources.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.5: Regional Trail System</b></p> <p>The County shall coordinate with Santa Clara and Monterey Counties to identify ways to connect San Benito County trails to a larger regional trail system.</p>	<p>Considers coordination with neighboring counties in order to expand and connect the County's trails to the larger regional trail system, thereby reducing impact to recreational resources.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.6: Optimal Use of Parks</b></p> <p>The County shall provide the optimal level of service for each County park, based on its use and cost-effectiveness, recognizing that each individual facility has a different mission and a unique set of operating conditions.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to individual recreational facilities by recognizing the specific needs and operating conditions of each facility in order to provide an optimal level of service.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.7: On-Site Recreation</b></p> <p>The County shall require new major subdivisions to include on-site recreation facilities, with design and features appropriate to the size, type, and setting of each subdivision and with financing for long-term maintenance.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to recreational facilities by requiring new development projects to include on-site recreational facilities and long-term financing for maintenance.</p>	1

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<p><b>Policy NCR-3.8: Trail Alignments</b> The County shall encourage the use of existing natural and human-made corridors such as creeks, railroad rights of way, and corridors when creating future bike path and pedestrian and equestrian trail alignments.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to recreational resources by encouraging the use of existing and human-made corridors for future bike and trail alignments.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>NCR-3.9: Evaluation of New Development</b> The County shall require an evaluation of new development within existing communities to include an analysis of the individual and cumulative effect of the development on the recreational needs of the community and County.</p>	<p>Requires new development projects to evaluate its effects on the recreational needs of the community and County, which would minimize the effects to existing recreational facilities.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>NCR-3.10: River Parkway</b> The County shall pursue the development of the San Benito River Parkway, including land acquisition through the entitlement process as well as development of connected trails from Bolado Park to San Juan Bautista.</p>	<p>Once approved, this project would provide additional recreational and trail resources for County residents.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Goal NCR-7: Cultural and Historic Resources</b> To protect, preserve, and enhance the unique cultural and historic resources in the County.</p>	<p>Avoids recreational impacts by setting the overall goal to protect the important cultural resources in the County that are also recognized as valuable recreational resources.</p>	<p>1,2</p>
<p><b>Policy NCR-7.2: Commercial Recreational Uses</b> The County shall promote commercial recreational uses in underutilized historic structures.</p>	<p>Prevents the deterioration of recreational resources, also recognized for their historic value, by promoting commercial recreational uses in underutilized historic structures.</p>	<p>1,2</p>

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<b>Circulation Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal C-1: Roadways</b></p> <p>To provide an adequate road system that is safe, efficient, reliable, and within the County’s ability to finance and maintain.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to recreational resources, specifically bicycle and pedestrian pathways, by ensuring that the entire roadway system is efficient, reliable, and well-funded.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy C-1.2: Complete Streets</b></p> <p>The County shall plan for use of roadways by all vehicle types and users, including automobiles, trucks, alternative energy vehicles, agricultural equipment, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians, when constructing or modifying roadways. Additionally, the County shall plan its road and street network to reflect a context sensitive approach to the design of thoroughfare assemblies, where the allocation of right-of-way and the facilities provided within are based on the intended character, whether urban or rural, of a particular location (urban context). Roads and streets within communities shall be designed to support and encourage walkability as a response to their context, whereas roads in open areas of the County shall be designed primarily for vehicular circulation. As such, thoroughfares that serve both open areas and communities in the County shall change as the surrounding urban context varies. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encouraging thoroughfare designs that are context sensitive, such as those recommended in <i>Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)</i>;</li> </ol>	<p>Reduces potential impacts to recreational resources by requiring the County to plan for roadway improvements that affect all user types, including bicyclists and pedestrians, who use existing complete street features, such as bike paths and sidewalks for recreation purposes.</p>	1

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<p>2. Supporting urban design principles that promote walkability within our communities to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A mix and variety of land uses designed to be relatively compact and in close proximity to one another;</li> <li>b. Buildings that are oriented toward streets, with appropriately narrow setbacks and functional entries directly fronting onto sidewalks;</li> <li>c. Pedestrian-scaled architecture, landscape, and thoroughfares designed to provide engaging sidewalk views and comfort to pedestrians traveling at slow speeds; and</li> <li>d. Circulation networks that provide an interconnected system of streets and open spaces with relatively small block lengths;</li> </ul> <p>3. Creating multi-modal street connections in order to establish a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network;</p> <p>4. Incorporating pedestrian and bicycle facilities, where appropriate and feasible, that promote safety and maximize access;</p> <p>5. Planting street trees adjacent to curbs and between the street and sidewalk to provide a buffer between the pedestrian and the automobile, where appropriate;</p> <p>6. Incorporating traffic calming devices such as roundabouts, bulb-outs at intersections, and traffic tables; and</p> <p>7. Coordinating with other agencies and cities to ensure connections are made between jurisdictions.</p>		

<b>Goals and Policies</b>	<b>How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact</b>	<b>Impact REC-#</b>
<p><b>Goal C-2: Pedestrian, Equestrian, and Bicycle Trails</b></p> <p>To provide a safe, continuous, and accessible system of facilities for bicycle and pedestrian travel in appropriate areas of the County.</p>	<p>Minimizes impacts to recreational resources by ensuring a safe, continuous, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian system is provided where needed in the County.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy C-2.1: Bicycle, Pedestrian and Equestrian Systems</b></p> <p>The County shall encourage complete, safe, and interconnected bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian systems, as appropriate to the context, that serves both commuter and recreational use, and provides access to major destinations in the County.</p>	<p>Supports recreational opportunities by encouraging a complete and safe bicycle and pedestrian system in the County.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy C-2.2: Bikeway Construction</b></p> <p>The County shall plan, design, and construct bikeways consistent with the 2009 County Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan or its succeeding plan. Priority shall be given to bicycle commuting routes, routes to schools, bike lanes on all new streets classified as arterials or collectors, and bike lanes on or adjacent to existing heavily traveled roads.</p>	<p>Requires the County to plan and construct bikeways consistent with the County's Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan, thereby minimizing effects on existing bikeways and pedestrian amenities, and ensuring future bicycle and pedestrian amenities are planned.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy C-2.3: Bicycle Parking Facilities</b></p> <p>The County shall provide or encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities at transit facilities, private and public facilities, and park-and-ride lots.</p>	<p>Encourages the use of bicycle recreational opportunities through the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities at transit facilities</p>	1
<p><b>Policy C-2.4: Bicycle Wayfinding Signs</b></p> <p>The County shall work with SBCOG to install signs that identify designated bicycle routes and alert motorists to share the road to help bicyclists safely navigate the County.</p>	<p>Supports recreational uses by providing infrastructure such as signs.</p>	1

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<p><b>Policy C-2.6: Development Along Planned Bikeways</b></p> <p>The County shall require project applicants of new developments adjacent to designated bikeways to provide the portion of the planned bikeway within the development, including rights-of-way dedication and/or construction when (1) a nexus can be established between the proposed development and the dedication and/or construction; and (2) the dedication and/or construction would be roughly proportional to the development’s impacts.</p>	<p>Avoids impacts to existing recreational resources and the need for the County to provide new amenities by requiring project applicants of new developments to provide bikeways, including rights-of-way dedication and construction.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy C-2.7: Funding for Bikeway System</b></p> <p>The County shall pursue additional State and Federal funding for the bikeway system.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to recreational resources by ensuring the County will pursue federal and state funding opportunities for the County’s bikeway system.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy C-2.12: Pedestrian Improvements</b></p> <p>The County shall work with SBCOG to support the installation of roadway improvements that better accommodate pedestrians, such as countdown signals at signalized intersections, audible signals for the visually-impaired, and pedestrian-friendly signal timing.</p>	<p>Limits impacts to recreational resources in the County by supporting the SBCOG to install roadway improvements that better accommodate pedestrians, which would improve the County’s residents and visitors’ accessibility to related recreational amenities.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Policy C-3.6: Transit to Recreational Areas</b></p> <p>The County shall work with the Local Transportation Authority, Caltrans, and the State and Federal parks to establish transit access to recreational areas within the County.</p>	<p>Encourages the County to establish transit access to recreational areas, which would improve accessibility to recreational areas and reduce impacts on overused recreational resources.</p>	<p>1</p>

Goals and Policies	How the Goal/Policy Avoids or Reduces Impact	Impact REC-#
<b>Public Facilities and Services Element</b>		
<p><b>Goal PFS-1: General Public Facilities and Services</b></p> <p>To provide residents and businesses quality, cost-effective, and sustainable public facilities and services.</p>	<p>Sets the overall goal to provide County residents and businesses with cost-effective and sustainable public facilities, including recreational resources, thereby minimizing development effects on existing recreational resources.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy PFS-1.1: Essential Facilities and Services</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure that adequate public facilities and services essential for public health and safety are provided to all County residents and businesses and maintained at acceptable service levels. Where public facilities and services are provided by other agencies, the County shall encourage similar service level goals.</p>	<p>Reduces impacts to existing recreational resources because the County would ensure all public facilities are adequate and maintained at acceptable service levels.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy PFS-1.8: Public Facility Sizing</b></p> <p>The County shall ensure that public facilities are designed to meet the projected capacity needs of existing and planned communities in order to reduce the need for future replacement. For facilities subject to incremental sizing, the County shall require the initial design to include adequate space or right-of-way to accommodate foreseeable future expansion.</p>	<p>Ensures that public facilities meet the projected capacity needs of the existing and planned growth in the County by ensuring plans include adequate space for future expansion, reducing the potential that existing public facilities such as parks and recreation areas are degraded due to overuse.</p>	1
<p><b>Policy PFS-1.9: Development Review</b></p> <p>The County shall evaluate facility capacity, levels of service, and/or funding needs during the development review process to ensure adequate levels of service and facilities are provided and maintained.</p>	<p>Requires the County to evaluate facility capacity, levels of services, and funding needs during development review for new projects, which would ensure adequate levels of service for public facilities are maintained, reducing the impacts on existing recreational resources.</p>	1,2

*Source:* San Benito County 2011, 2014; EMC Planning Group 2014; Planning Partners 2012.

***Impact REC-1: Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of existing facilities would occur or be accelerated (XV.a).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

The proposed 2035 General Plan plans for development due to population growth, which would increase the use of and overall demand for existing park and recreational facilities within the County, such that existing recreational conditions would deteriorate and new recreational amenities would be needed. Because the proposed 2035 General Plan contains goals and policies to adequately maintain existing facilities and fund the development of new park facilities to serve new residents and visitors, this would be a less-than-significant impact.

Population projections for the County indicate that by 2035, the County's population could grow by approximately 39,462 residents (i.e., 94,731 total residents), of which 36,102 new residents could reside in unincorporated areas. This would result in an increase in demand for recreational facilities and park and open space lands. This growth would increase the demands on existing facilities and the County's costs to maintain existing parks, acquire additional parkland, and build new facilities. While the anticipated population growth would be primarily directed to cities' spheres of influence, New Community Study Areas, and towards new residential land use designations and new and already approved residential developments (e.g., Santana Ranch and Fairview Corners Specific Plans) where recreational facilities are planned under the proposed General Plan, there is the potential for existing facilities to deteriorate due to increasing demand. Additionally, the increase in population growth in areas where existing facilities may not be adequate, such as rural communities (e.g., Panoche, Paicines) could result in accelerated deterioration of existing facilities due to significant use or overuse. Unincorporated areas of the County that currently have deficient facilities may be particularly vulnerable to accelerated deterioration from overuse.

Nearly 80 percent of the unincorporated land in San Benito County consists of some form of public or private open space. Over 90 percent of the government land is federally managed, by either the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the National Parks Service (NPS). The majority of this land is located in the central and southern parts of the County. Natural and cultural resources in the County provide various recreational opportunities to County residents and visitors.

Recreational acreage goals, used as metrics to evaluate recreational demands, serve as a standard to guide the planning for new recreational lands and facilities. In the 1992 General Plan, the County adopted a minimum parkland standard of 5.0 acres of parks for every 1,000 residents. Under this standard, the County would strive to provide 312 acres of parklands. Currently, approximately 899 acres of existing parkland serve County residents and visitors, not including

federal and state parks and wildlife areas (which total over 144,416 acres). Based on this amount, the recreation resources within the County provide approximately 16.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 people, not including recreational facilities within CSAs, some of which are private. Thus, the County is currently exceeding its parkland standard.

The acreage goals under the proposed 2035 General Plan apply the same parkland standards of 5.0 acres per 1,000 people. The proposed 2035 General Plan forecasts population within the County to be 94,731 persons by 2035, or an additional 39,462 residents. This population growth would translate to a greater demand for recreational facilities. Based on this amount, a total of 474 acres of parkland would be needed to meet the goals for recreational facilities set forth in the 2035 General Plan. Because the County currently provides over 899 acres of County parkland, no additional parkland would be required beyond what is currently provided at County parks and recreational areas. County residents and visitors also have access to approximately 144,416 total acres of parkland, including federal and state park and recreation areas. Additional parkland would not be needed to meet increasing demands due to a growing population. Yet, because much of the existing parkland that is currently available is spread across both the northern and southern parts of the County and is not easily accessible to all County residents, particularly residents of new communities or rural communities, over time population growth may cause accelerated deterioration of the existing recreational facilities closest to population centers from overuse. Although specific project facility locations and designs are not known at this time, future park projects would be reviewed by the County on a case-by-case basis, and would be required to undergo a project-level environmental review.

The anticipated population increase is likely to impact existing recreational facilities located outside the County's jurisdiction, including within federal and state managed lands. Although these lands are not owned and operated by the County, increases in population growth are expected to also increase the demand for recreational facilities on other lands, which would then lead to the potential deterioration of federal and state facilities due to use by County residents and visitors. For example, several rural communities located in southern San Benito County, such as Panoche and Paicines, lack County-owned recreational facilities (see [Table 18-1](#)). However, these communities are located close to several large federally managed recreational areas, such as lands managed by the BLM.

Overall, despite the sufficient amount of federal and County controlled parkland to meet estimated future demand, due to the location of these resources, the growing population may demand new County facilities near new population centers or choose to use existing County facilities rather than federally-operated parks, which would increase the County costs to maintain existing facilities, develop new recreation programs, hire new personnel, acquire new parkland, and construct new amenities. The increased revenue generated from various park-financing mechanisms considered under Policy NCR-3.10 could offset future costs to some

extent. Similar to NCR-3.10, there are numerous other proposed goals and policies under the 2035 General Plan Land Use, Natural and Cultural Resources, Circulation, and Public Facilities and Services Elements that would minimize the physical deterioration of park lands and other recreational facilities. [Table 18-2](#) lists the goals and policies that support recreation opportunities.

As set forth in [Table 18-2](#), within the 2035 General Plan Land Use Element, Natural Resources Element, Circulation Element, and Public Facilities and Services Element are numerous goals and policies that support maintaining adequate recreational facilities. In the Land Use Element there are goals and policies designed to support orderly and timely development of recreational facilities and to protect valuable open space and other recreational resources by encouraging clustered residential development and well-planned communities. Goal LU-1 and its supporting policies would improve recreational opportunities by maintaining the County's rural character and important recreational areas while also providing areas for future growth. To protect valuable open space and other recreational resources, Goal LU-4 and its policies support the clustering of residential development to protect agricultural and natural resources that provide valuable recreation and open space areas. Likewise, Goal LU-9 and its supporting policies would ensure orderly development in city fringe areas, which would include providing sufficient public services such as recreational facilities for new development. Such goals and policies are important because they ensure the orderly and timely provision of new recreation facilities at needed locations and at the appropriate time according to increasing population and changing recreational demands.

The Natural and Cultural Resources Element contains Goal NCR-1, designed to limit impacts to recreational resources in the County by preserving valuable open space lands. The policies supporting this goal would improve the County's open space network and encourage conservation easements and an open space overlay district. Similarly, Goal NCR-3 supports the maintenance of a comprehensive parks system to protect public recreational areas and meet future recreation needs. Policies under Goal NCR-3 would limit impacts to existing recreational resources in the County from overuse by expanding the recreational resources available through a comprehensive parkland system and a regional trail system. The policies would also limit impacts by mandating a parkland standard to be applied to all new development projects to ensure that adequate recreational lands are created for future residential growth. Other policies would ensure that the County coordinates with other partners to improve recreational amenities, and development proponents incorporate recreational amenities into their projects. Finally, several policies are in place to ensure financing mechanisms are available to fund needed recreational improvements.

The Circulation Element contains goals and policies to ensure that existing recreational facilities would not be substantially degraded through implementation of the 2035 General Plan. Many alternative modes of transportation such as bicycling, horseback riding, and walking are

recognized as important recreational opportunities. County efforts to increase infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation will, in turn, also increase recreational amenities. The goals and policies in the Circulation Element focus primarily on improving the bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian infrastructure in the County. The Public Facilities and Services Element contains Goal PFS-1 and several policies designed to provide residents and businesses quality, cost-effective, and sustainable public facilities and services, including parks and other recreational resources. These policies would ensure adequate levels of service for public facilities are maintained, also reducing the impacts on existing recreational resources.

The 2035 General Plan contains a comprehensive set of goals and policies intended to reduce impacts associated with the potential deterioration of parks and recreational facilities. Because the distribution of the population growth would occur within communities that have more than adequate recreational facilities and where development fees from new development could be used to maintain existing facilities, or in new development projects that would be required to provide new recreational facilities, the project would not cause substantial deterioration of recreational facilities. Further, project-level impacts would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through the environmental review process, and the proposed specific policies would be in place to promote the development of facilities to serve new residents and visitors. Impacts related to the deterioration of existing parks and other recreational facilities would therefore be less than significant.

***Impact REC-2: Include recreational facilities or require the construction of expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment (XV.b).***

**Level of Significance:** Less than significant, no mitigation required.

As noted above, the County has sufficient recreational facilities to accommodate planned population growth. New development will be required to pay fees that will help to ensure that the existing recreational facilities will be maintained. As outlined in [Table 18-2](#), an overarching goal of the Natural and Cultural Resources Element (Goal NCR-3) is to develop and maintain a comprehensive system of parklands and protected public recreational areas that meet both the active and passive recreational needs of all age groups. This goal would ensure that existing recreational amenities are maintained, minimizing the need to construct new amenities elsewhere. In particular, Policy NCR-3.1 would require the County to continue to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain a comprehensive system of parkland and recreational facilities that include active and passive recreation for a wide range of users. As a result, the County would ensure that existing park facilities are maintained. Currently, it is speculative that new recreational facilities would be required to serve the County's anticipated increased population. However, should new facilities be needed, any environmental effects associated with the new facilities would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and undergo project-level environmental review, which would ensure additional compliance with specific regulations, such as the County

zoning code and noise ordinance, and would avoid the potential that new facilities result in substantial adverse physical impacts on the environment. Because it cannot be known if or where such facilities would be located, it is not possible to determine the potential effects at any one location. Generally, the potential effects of constructing such facilities would be similar to those summarized in Chapter 17, Public Services, [Table 17-2](#), of this RDEIR for the construction of governmental facilities.

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