

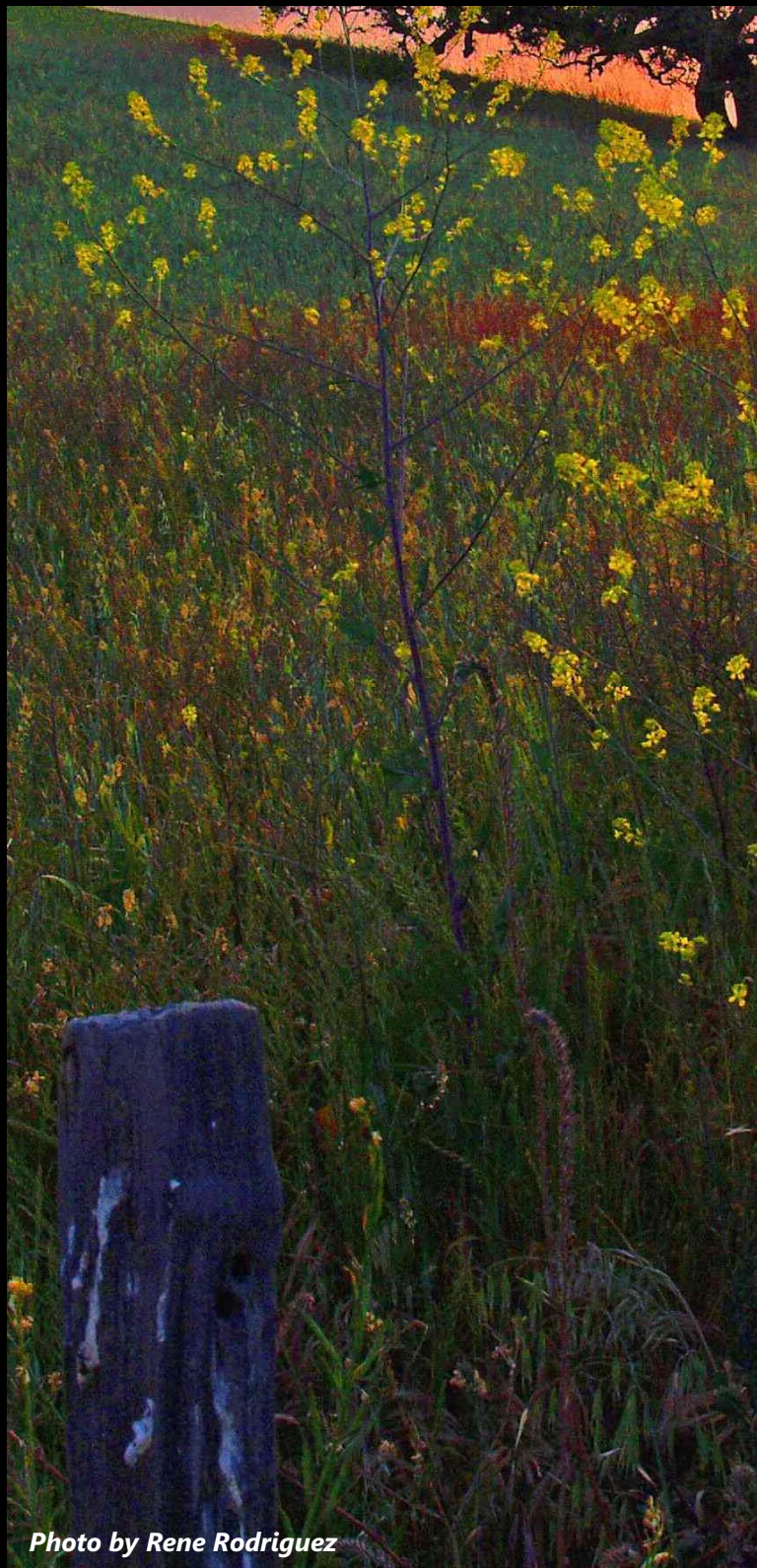


## Chapter 9 Scenic Resources

This chapter describes the scenic resources in San Benito County. This analysis is based on the existing visual character and resources in the county, which are linked to the region's predominantly rural atmosphere, natural topography, open grassland vegetation, agricultural land uses, and cultural history. Views of mountains, undeveloped rangelands, large agricultural fields and croplands, natural ridgelines along the Diablo and Gabilan Ranges, and annual grasslands make up some of the prominent elements of the county's scenic landscape. US Route 101 and State Routes (SR) 129 and 146 are all County-designated scenic highways. State Route 146 is also eligible for State scenic highway designation, as are SRs 25 and 156. The majority of urban development and related night-time lighting are located within and adjacent to the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista.

This chapter is organized into a single section:

- Scenic Resources (Section 9.1)



*Photo by Rene Rodriguez*



## CHAPTER 9. SCENIC RESOURCES

*San Benito County General Plan*

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## SECTION 9.1 SCENIC RESOURCE TRENDS

### Introduction

This section summarizes the existing scenic character of San Benito County. The farm-rich agricultural croplands, rural character, rugged terrain, and natural geologic features that lie between the two Central Coast mountain ranges, the Gabilan and Diablo ranges, and the many noteworthy geologic features and monuments present in several of the National, State, and County parks have attracted residents and visitors to the region for decades. San Benito County has a total land area of approximately 888,924 acres, or 1,389 square miles. Located in the California Coast Range, the westernmost tip of the county lies within 10 miles of Monterey Bay, while the easternmost tip is approximately 10 miles from the San Joaquin Valley. The most striking features in the county are the Diablo and Gabilan Mountain Ranges and the San Benito Valley between them. Elevations range from 80 feet near Aromas in the northwest portion of the county to 5,241 feet at the peak of San Benito Mountain in the southeast. There are also over 918 miles of public roadways within the county, of which 416 miles are County roads, including five County-designated scenic roadways.

### Key Terms

**California Scenic Highway Program.** The California Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways.

**Conservation Easement.** A legal agreement between a landowner and another party that limits uses of the land in order to protect its biological and other resource value.

**Official State Scenic Highway.** A scenic highway officially designated by the State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee after application from a local jurisdiction, and only when the highway is identified on State Scenic Highway Master Plans.

**Open Space Land.** Open space land is any parcel, area, or waterway that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use. Under Section 65560 of the California Government Code, open space land is broadly defined as land designated for the preservation of natural resources (e.g., lakeshore and watershed lands); managed production of resources (e.g., lands for agriculture, pasture, forestry, recharge of groundwater basins); outdoor recreation (e.g., parks, scenic highway corridors, areas with outstanding scenic, historic, and cultural values); or public health and safety (e.g., flood plains, unstable soil areas).

**Recreational Area.** Any public or private space set aside or primarily oriented to recreational use. This includes both parks and community centers.

**Rural Designated Scenic Highway.** A route outside urban boundaries that traverses a visual corridor within which natural scenic resources and aesthetic values will be protected and enhanced.

**Scenic Corridor.** The visible land area outside of a transportation corridor (road) right-of-way and generally described as the "view from the road." A Scenic Corridor must be defined adjacent to all Scenic Roads and Highways.



**Urban.** The term urban is used to describe land uses common to a city or unincorporated community. Urban land uses include residential, commercial, industrial, and related institutional uses.

**Urban Designated Scenic Highway.** A route that traverses a visual corridor, offers an unhindered view of attractive urban and/or natural resources, and is within the urban boundaries of the cities of San Juan Bautista or Hollister.

### Regulatory Setting

#### State of California

**Sections 65560 – 65568, Government Code: Open Space Lands.** This part of the State Government Code defines open space and requires every city and county to prepare open space plans as a required element of their General Plan. Building permits, subdivision approvals, and zoning ordinance approvals must be consistent with the local open space plan.

**Section 5076, Public Resources Code: California Trails Act.** This law requires every city and county to consider trail-oriented recreational uses and consider such demands in developing specific open space programs in their General Plan. Every city, county, and district must also consider the feasibility of integrating trail routes with appropriate segments of the State trail system.

**Streets and Highways Code, Section 260, et. seq.** A California highway may be designated as scenic depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on the traveler's enjoyment of the view. When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway, defined by the motorist's line of vision (a reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to a distant horizon). The city or county must also adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor, including: 1) regulation of land use and density of development; 2) detailed land and site planning; 3) control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards); 4) careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and 5) careful attention to design and appearance of structures and equipment.

#### San Benito County General Plan (Existing)

The following goals and policies from the land use, scenic roads and highways, and open space and conservation elements relate to scenic resources in the county.

##### ***Land Use Element (1994)***

**Policy 12.** The County shall use specific zoning tools such as Planned Unit Developments to allow for clustering and density transfer as a means to provide innovative and diversified development, and to avoid hazardous areas while maintaining the rural character of the county. The development design and density must be consistent with Policy 9 and its actions.

##### **Actions**

- a) Continue to use the Planned Unit Development ordinance.



**Policy 36.** The County should maintain high standards of siting and design in the development of all land uses. Standards and criteria shall be established by the County.

### **Actions**

- a) Incorporate the concepts of site and design planning into the County's development regulations. This review would be implemented at the subdivision or zoning (PUD) stages of the development process.
- b) Support efforts of local organizations to designate areas as historic districts (e.g., Tres Pinos, Dunneville).
- c) New development in areas of historical interest shall be reviewed for compatibility with existing structures. Demolition of existing structures should be weighed against the potential loss of historic resources.

### ***Open Space and Conservation Element (1995)***

#### **Policy 11. Open Space Zoning**

It will be the County's continuing policy to enact a series of zoning ordinances designed to protect the natural resources of San Benito County.

### **Actions**

2. Prepare an Environmental Constraints ordinance to protect sensitive natural resource areas and avoid public health and safety hazards.

### **Objectives**

1. To use various types of open space within the Spheres-of-Influence of San Juan Bautista and Hollister for the purpose of controlling the timing and location of urban development and as a means of preserving certain land (these lands should remain undeveloped until a determination is made by the appropriate legislating body that it is economically and financially feasible to provide public services and facilities for urban use). The urban reserve areas shall be used to buffer agricultural uses from urban uses and to discourage non-contiguous development patterns, which unnecessarily increase the cost of community services to the residents of San Benito County and cause premature land conversion to urban uses.

As it becomes evident that services will soon be available, the County may choose to increase the allowable density through zoning provided that development of these lands considers ultimate development or urban density through a master plan for street design and home site location as well as the provision for urban-type services, such as sewer and storm drains.

2. The maintenance of the county's existing rural atmosphere.



### **Policy 12. Direct Development to Urban Areas.**

It will be the County's policy to apply land use controls to ensure that only nonurban uses are located beyond Spheres of Influence and Urban Reserve Areas, except for specific areas designated Rural/Urban, Area of Special Study, Residential Commercial, or Industrial on the General Plan Land Use Map.

#### **Actions**

1. The County shall review its Zoning Maps and Ordinances for land within the Spheres-of-Influence of Hollister and San Juan Bautista. An appropriate zoning district should be developed so that limited development may occur within this area. Development proposals within these areas will be jointly reviewed by the County and the appropriate city.
2. It shall be the County's policy to require that developers of land outside unincorporated areas and within Spheres-of-Influence prepare an overlay plan showing the ultimate development of the property, including streets, the location of urban services, lot lines, and urban densities. This will ensure that present-day development is compatible with the needs and requirements of future urban density development and services.
3. Development proposals will need to be consistent with Policy 17 and Action A of the Land Use Element.

### **Policy 15. Open Space Overlay District**

The County will enforce the intended purpose of the Open Space (OS) District of the county by using the Zoning Ordinance to protect and preserve the rural landscape and implement open space policies for public health, safety, and welfare, continued agricultural uses, scenic viewscape preservation including scenic highways corridors, park and recreation uses, conservation of 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.

### **Policy 16. Open Space Around Cities**

It is the County's policy to preserve a rural atmosphere by directing population growth and public service extensions to infill development and avoiding leapfrog growth.

#### **Actions**

1. Maintain open space around San Juan Bautista, Hollister, and existing communities.
2. Maintain prime agricultural lands in agricultural uses.
3. The County may, at the appropriate time, develop plans for the unincorporated communities within the county.

### **Policy 17. Ridgeline Development**

To preserve the rural character of the area, new development shall be directed away from the horizon through the use of building envelopes and integration of building architecture into the contour of the horizon.

#### **Actions**

1. Adopt a Ridgeline Ordinance.

**Issue:** Several proposals for new towns and new planned communities have been submitted for development in the unincorporated area. The countywide goal to maintain a rural atmosphere can be undermined if large-scale development is allowed without accompanying measures for maintaining a rural atmosphere.

### **Policy 50. Historic Structures**

It shall be the policy of the County to preserve the historic character of the communities of Tres Pinos and New Idria.

#### **Actions**

1. Establish historic districts for the communities of Tres Pinos and New Idria.
2. Promote commercial-recreational uses in underutilized historic structures.
3. Cooperate with the Historical Society and other organizations to assimilate information on historic areas of the county worth preservation.

### **Policy 51. Compatibility with Historic Structures**

It is the policy of the County to integrate architectural styles of new development with existing architecture (e.g., Saint Francis Retreat) and to protect existing historic structures.

#### **Actions**

1. Development proposals that would remove structures 100 years or older shall demonstrate why preservation of the structures and integration of the structures into a concept plan is inappropriate.
2. A historic consultant shall be retained at the developer's expense by the County to evaluate the historic merits of existing buildings, make recommendations for the new development, and, if necessary, to review building elevations for new development.
3. Require evaluation of development proposals with preservation of historic structures.



### **Scenic Roads and Highway Element (1982)**

#### **Goal**

The major goal of this element is the preservation of the scenic qualities of San Benito County. The scenic qualities of the county are a major attraction to both the resident and visitor. Clearly this is an important part of the agricultural/rural environment that should be preserved. Many activities, public or private, if carried out without consideration for the visual character of the area can have a detrimental effect on the quality of that visual experience. However, under proper supervision and with recognized guidelines, these same activities can occur and will strengthen the rural/agricultural scenic quality of San Benito County. In order to achieve the County's scenic highway goal, the following objectives, policies, and actions are established as they relate to specific activities and conditions:

**Objective.** Enhance and preserve the visual qualities of the designated scenic corridors. Certain transportation corridors in the county are recognized as having unusual or outstanding scenic qualities. These scenic corridors need not be limited to highways. It is the intent of this element to protect these transportation corridors.

**Policy 1.** It is the policy of San Benito County to provide for the protection of certain transportation corridors, which are recognized as having unusual or outstanding scenic qualities.

**Action.** Update the Scenic Corridor Combining District Ordinance as the best means of protecting the corridor. The review zone would be placed on all parcels located within the scenic corridor.

**Grading Objective.** Protect the visual characteristics of the landform and viewshed from disruption by grading operations.

**Policy 2.** Because the County recognizes the valuable resources of soil and the need for the preservation of natural environments, and because the County recognizes that grading can have significant adverse impacts within scenic areas, it is the County's policy to carefully review all projects involving grading within Scenic Corridors.

**Action.** Grading in the Scenic Corridor and on scenic roads or highways shall be reviewed by County staff for compliance with the objectives of this element. Final contour and landscaping recommendations shall be made to minimize the visual impact of the grading on the scenic corridor, in conformance with the County's grading requirements. Vegetative cover, preferably native to the area, and other screening devices should be provided to hide grading scars, blend with the natural landscape, and provide erosion control.

**Design Development Objective.** Minimize the obstruction of the viewshed with development.

**Policy 3.** Recognizing that most architectural designs are compatible with scenic areas, but that some can have a significant adverse impact on the scenic resource which the County seeks to preserve, it will be the County's policy to review proposals to insure that the obstruction of views is minimized.

**Action.** Review site planning to insure a reasonable and attractive appearance from the highway concurrent with a harmonious relationship with the existing landscape. Development that may be



determined not to be in harmonious relationship with the existing landscape shall be screened from view through planting or other forms of visual buffers.

Building height and setbacks shall be regulated to protect the field of vision in the scenic corridor. Building heights shall not exceed and setback requirements shall not be less than those of the basic zoning district.

**Landscape Objective.** Enhance the visual character of the corridor through appropriate landscaping.

**Policy 4.** It will be the policy of the County to enhance the visual character of the Scenic Corridor where appropriate.

**Action.** Landscaping in the scenic corridors should be compatible with local vegetation and ground forms. Indigenous plants and grasses should be used where appropriate and possible as a means of re-establishing the natural landscape. Ornamental landscaping around buildings and plants, such as row cropping, fruit trees, and other agricultural species, are desired and acceptable uses in the Scenic Corridor. Also included within the acceptable landscaped uses are grasses and fairway trees of parks and golf courses.

**Utility Line Objective.** Minimize the visual impact of utility lines in the scenic corridor.

**Policy 5.** It will be the County's policy to review each application and to provide mitigation measures, which will minimize the visual impact of utility lines on the Scenic Corridor.

**Actions.** All new electric and communication distribution facilities proposed within the scenic corridor shall be placed underground whenever feasible. Where overhead utility lines are unavoidable, every effort should be made to reduce the visual impact through elements of design.

**Signs Objective.** Eliminate signs within the Scenic Corridor other than those identified in the permitted use section of the Zoning Ordinance. This does not apply to temporary signs advertising the sale of agricultural commodities produced or processed on site, nor does it apply to State, County, or city signs.

**Policy 6.** It will be the policy of San Benito County to protect the Scenic Corridor from the proliferation of unnecessary signs.

**Actions.** Develop a sign ordinance that controls the locations and types of signs throughout the County areas. Suggested permitted uses within a Scenic Corridor have been provided in Appendix A. These uses could be used as a guideline for the development of a Scenic Highway Combining District Ordinance.

### ***San Benito County Code of Ordinances***

#### **County Development Lighting Regulations**

Title 19, Chapter 19.31 of the County Code contains the development lighting regulations. The purpose of this chapter in the Code is to encourage lighting practices and systems that will minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass, and curtail the degradation of the night time visual environment. The County's topographic and atmospheric conditions make it uniquely suited for astronomical observation. As a result, an observatory has been established at Fremont Peak State Park. Star gazing activities are also provided at Pinnacles National Monument. Because poor outdoor lighting can create light pollution



the County has established three lighting zones, allowing flexibility in the use of outdoor lighting at locations with appropriate distances from light-sensitive areas, such as parks. In particular, the lighting zones are established to protect Fremont Peak and Pinnacles National Monument from intruding light that can interfere with their dark sky policies. These lighting zones are illustrated in Figure 9-2. Development projects in the county are required to submit a project lighting plan to the Planning and Building Inspection Department, demonstrating conformance with the applicable lighting regulations.

### **Other County Scenic Criteria**

The following standards are included in the existing Benito County General Plan and used to evaluate highways identified in the State's Scenic Highway Master Plan. These standards apply to scenic highways designated by the State. Currently, there are no State designated Scenic Highways in the county. However, they have three eligible highways: SR 25, SR 146, and SR 156.

#### ***Criteria for Selection of a Scenic Highway***

- The scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent scenic, historic, or aesthetic value during all seasons.
- Consideration should be given to those highways or routes which are:
  - State or jurisdictional (city or county) entry routes.
  - Predominantly used for recreation or vacation travel.
  - Used for one-day sightseeing or study trips.
  - Part of an integrated or semi-integrated scenic route system that traverses varied scenic corridors for longer trips.
  - Travel through areas of extraordinary scenic value.
  - Typical or demonstrative of varied scenic factors available within the jurisdiction.
- If possible, all principal landscape and topographical type areas should be represented in the system.
- Routes of historic significance that connect places of interest should be considered even though the route is of marginal scenic significance.

#### ***Criteria for Selection of Scenic Roads and Highways in San Benito County***

- a. Designated on State Scenic Highway Master Plan;
- b. Scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent and continuous scenic, cultural, or aesthetic value during all seasons;
- c. Scenic corridor may have a variety of features, natural or human-made;
- d. Where appropriate, the scenic corridor should preserve the natural integrity of the ecosystem, or present an undisturbed nature, both landscape and panorama; and/or

- e. Highway is used predominantly for recreation travel or provides the visitor or resident a visual experience related to San Benito County's major attractions such as the agricultural areas, rangelands, or mountains.

### Major Findings

- SRs 129 and 146, and US 101, are all County-designated scenic highways. SR 146 is the only County-designated scenic highway that is also eligible for State scenic highway designation. The State has also designated SRs 25 and 156 as eligible for State scenic designation.
- The majority of scenic resources within the county consist of rolling terrain that provides mid- to long-range views of rangeland, cropland, rural residential uses, varying agricultural uses, some sparse oak woodland, and historic mining uses and geologic resources in the western part of the county.
- The San Benito valley floor offers many short-range views of nearby agricultural and rangelands, medium-range views of the rolling hillsides, and long-range views of the surrounding mountain ranges.
- The County adopted a Scenic Highway (SH) district that permits agricultural uses and some dwelling units, subject to staff approval, within the district boundaries. The County also has adopted a sign ordinance to maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment in the county.
- The existing General Plan (1992) recommends the establishment of historic districts for the communities of Tres Pinos, Dunneville, and New Idria; however, no formal zoning designation or districts have been established.
- The County adopted hillside development regulations to help maintain existing rural characteristics, conserve landforms and the natural landscape, and ensure that developments are designed to fit with the characteristics and constraints of the site.
- The County has designated lighting zones to help site outdoor lighting at appropriate locations that are away from sensitive uses, especially Pinnacles National Monument and Fremont Peak State Park.
- Mature blue oaks and valley oak hardwoods cover the western, central, and northeastern portions of the county. The County enforces a canopy retention standard that outlines the amounts of woodland canopy that must be retained on a parcel during site modifications.

### Existing Conditions

The county's rich agricultural croplands, rangelands, rolling hills, open spaces, historic mining sites, rural character, scenic roadways, and natural features have attracted residents and visitors to the region for decades. Preserving scenic features, including both natural and working landscapes, enhances the scenic values and economic development potential of the county and adds to the quality of life for existing and future residents.



## CHAPTER 9. SCENIC RESOURCES

### *San Benito County General Plan*

The scenic resources within the county include a diversity of natural settings and landscapes. Because agriculture and rangeland are dominant land uses within the county and account for approximately 75 percent of the total land area, scenic resources primarily include views of agricultural farms, grazing lands, and cultivated fields in the region's foreground, views of valleys immediately beyond the county's several small cities, views toward rolling hillsides, open spaces, and private lands, and distant views of the Diablo Range and ridgelines to the east and west. Scenic resources also include historic mining sites and the historic and rural character of the small towns within the county, including New Idria and Tres Pinos.

Together, the many views, viewpoints, and scenic qualities of the surroundings mountain ranges frame the county's urban landscape within the northern San Benito Valley and add to its natural beauty. Because of the varying topography within the county, including the valleys and rolling hills and ridgelines, the county also includes varying elevated visual features, such as large trees, rock outcroppings, bluffs, and historical buildings and landmarks. The following summaries describe some of the county's most prominent scenic resources, including the agricultural croplands, open space land, scenic roadways, central coast mountain ranges, and rural character of the county's built environment, including its growing cities and small historic towns.

### **Rural Character**

San Benito County is known for its major topographic features, including the Diablo and Gabilan mountain ranges, fertile valley floor, rolling annual grasslands, oak woodlands, and many rows of crops, cultivated fields, orchards, vineyards, farms, and ranches. The county has relatively little urban development compared to neighboring counties and other parts of the state.

### **Cropland and Rangeland**

Cropland and rangeland in San Benito County have high scenic value. These areas constitute more than 75 percent of the county's total land area, of which approximately 91 percent is grazing or rangeland and approximately 4 percent is prime farmland. Most of the prime farmland is located in the northern part of the county adjacent to urban and developed areas on the San Benito Valley floor. Over 580,000 acres of land within the county are currently (2010) under Williamson Act contracts, ensuring additional protection of agricultural resources. Because the majority of land within the county is agriculture, many of the scenic resources consist of views of agricultural areas, such as row crops, pastures, orchards, vineyards, ranches, barns, and farms with cattle and various livestock. Most roadways within the county offer some views of rural agricultural landscapes.

During late Winter and early Spring, the valley floor and rolling hillsides become a verdant green color and transition into the prototypical California landscape of yellow and brown dried grasses during Summer and Fall. While there are some oak woodlands in the county, rangelands are predominantly made up of annual grasslands. Development within these areas tends to be limited to small-scale agricultural improvements, such as barns, fences, and cattle-holding areas. Travelers along US 101 and SRs 25, 129, 146, and 156 have views of surrounding rangeland.

### **Mountain Ranges**

There are two mountain ranges that transect San Benito County and provide high scenic values: the Gabilan Range and Diablo Range.

### ***Gabilan Range***

The Gabilan Range runs along the western edge of the county and trends in a northwest to southeast direction. The range is bordered by the Santa Lucia Range towards Big Sur to the west and the San Andreas Fault, San Benito Valley, SR 25, and the Diablo Range to the east. Fremont Peak, at 3,173 feet, is the highest peak within San Benito County in the Gabilan Range. It is protected within the 244-acre Fremont Peak State Park.

### ***Diablo Range***

The Diablo Range runs along the eastern edge of the county and is part of the California central coastal range. The range includes summits over 3,000 feet and steep transitions of rolling foothills between the San Benito Valley floor to 2,000 foot plateaus. San Benito Mountain, at 5,241 feet, is the highest peak in the Clear Creek Management Area, a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness area. On clear days the peak can be seen from the valley floor.

## **Public and Private Recreation Areas**

### ***Public Lands***

There are numerous publicly-owned open space areas in the county, including National and State parks, County parks, and public domain lands. These areas host a wide variety of uses ranging from public facilities, such as Paicines and Hernandez Reservoirs, to heavily-used recreational areas such as Bolado Park. Approximately 15 percent of the land in the unincorporated county is publicly-owned open space, most of which is Federally-owned (91 percent). Figure 9-1 and Table 9-1 summarize the size, location, and attributes of identified public lands that are available for recreational uses.

### ***Trails***

Trails within the county serve bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians. One popular trail is the San Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

### ***Schools***

School sites, while primarily serving the educational needs of students and faculty, frequently serve the recreational needs of surrounding neighborhoods, such as sports fields and tennis or basketball courts. Other facilities are also used by residents after school hours.





**FIGURE 9-1  
DESIGNATED AND  
ELIGIBLE SCENIC  
ROADWAY SEGMENTS  
AND OPEN SPACE  
LANDS WITHIN  
SAN BENITO COUNTY**

**Legend**

- County-Designated Scenic Roadways
- Eligible State Scenic Roadways
- Rivers

**Roadways**

- State Highways
- County Roads
- San Juan Bautista City Limits
- Hollister City Limits
- County Limits

**Park and Open Space Lands**

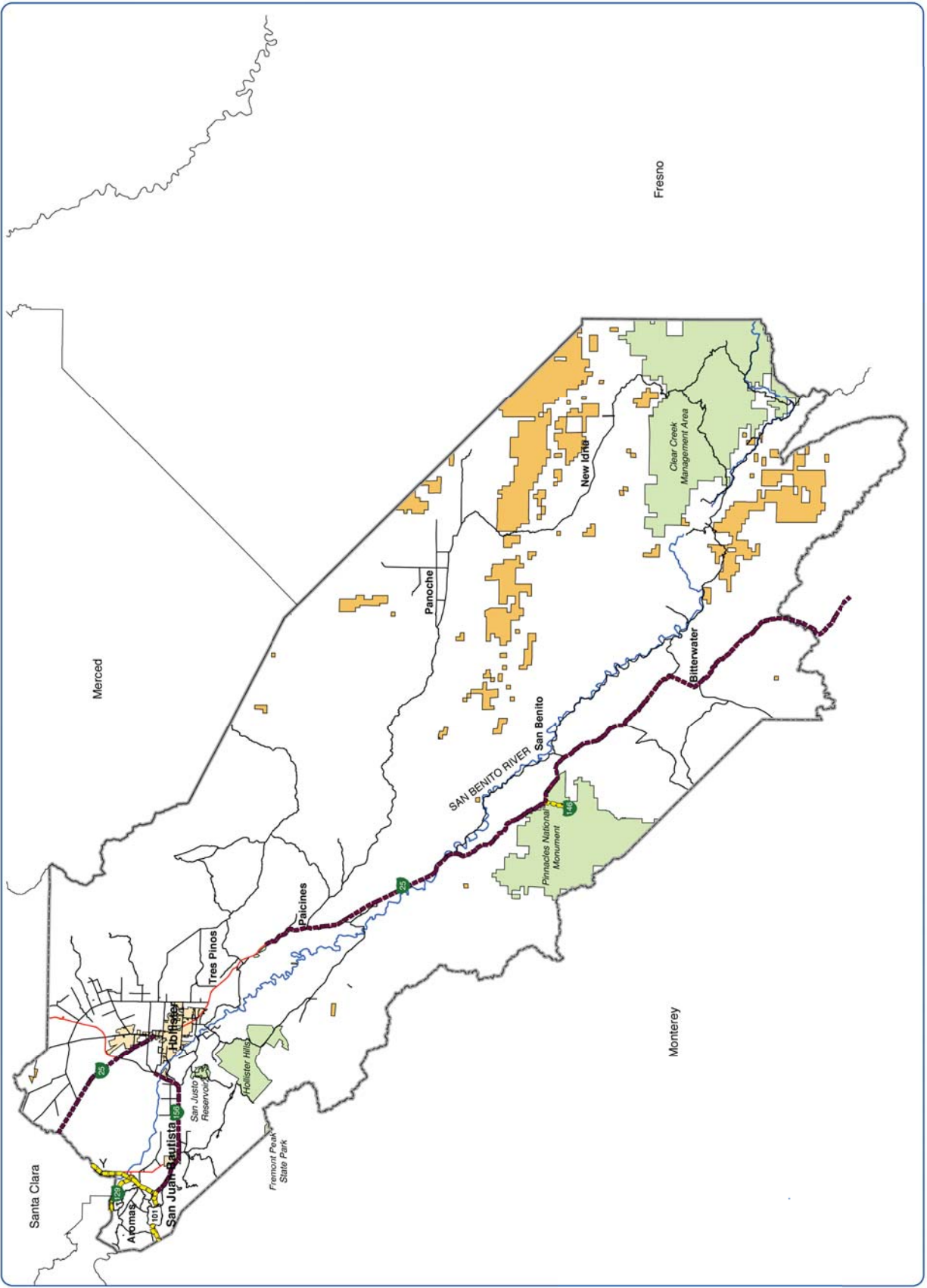
- Bureau of Reclamation Lands
- County Parklands

NOTE: State Route 146 is both a County-designated scenic roadway and an eligible state scenic roadway.



0 1.5 3 6 Miles

Source: San Benito County Planning and Building Department, 2010



**TABLE 9-1  
EXISTING PUBLIC PARK AND OPEN SPACE AREAS**

San Benito County  
2009

Government Entity	Acres <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Total Park and Open Space
<b>Federal</b>		
Pinnacles National Monument	26,000	
BLM Land	105,403	
San Justo Reservoir	383	
Land Near San Justo Reservoir	118	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>253,793</i>	<i>91%</i>
<b>State</b>		
Bolado State Park	126	
Fremont Peak State Park	244	
Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area	7,100	
Buffer near Hollister Hills	1,690	
Miscellaneous State Lands	2,199	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>20,827</i>	<i>7.5%</i>
<b>County</b>		
Griswold Hills	516	
Hernandez Reservoir and Recreation Area	587	
Historical Park	33	
Veteran's Memorial Park	37	
Other	116	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>2,598</i>	<i>1%</i>
<b>Other Agencies</b>		
Water Agencies	211	
School Districts	113	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>0.12%</i>
<b>City</b>		
<b>Hollister</b>		
Airport Park	0.75	
Calaveras Community Park	7	
Central Avenue Mini Park	0.25	
Cerra Vista Park	3.5	
Dunne Community Park	3.5	
Frank Klauer Memorial Park	5	
John Z. Hernandez Memorial Park	0.25	
Las Brisas Estates Park	1	
McCarthy Street Park	1.5	



# CHAPTER 9. SCENIC RESOURCES

## San Benito County General Plan

**TABLE 9-1  
EXISTING PUBLIC PARK AND OPEN SPACE AREAS  
San Benito County  
2009**

Tony Aguirre Memorial Park	1	
Veteran's Tot Lot	0.25	
Vista Park Hill Community Park	15	
<b>San Juan Bautista</b>		
Abbe Park	NA	
Lucke Park	NA	
Rudy Park	NA	
<i>Subtotal</i>	39	0.1%
<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>	324	0%
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>277,586</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Acreage amounts are approximate and based on the County Parks and Recreation Facilities Draft Master Plan (April 2009), the 1992 General Plan, BLM, and US Park Service data, and information provided by the San Benito County Planning Department.

<sup>2</sup> Total does not include private/gated park acreages.

Sources: San Benito County Planning Department, 2010, San Benito County Parks and Recreation Facilities Draft Master Plan, April 2009, Planning Partners, 2010.

**TABLE 9-2  
EXISTING PUBLIC RECREATION AREAS  
San Benito County  
2009**

Public Recreation Areas	Acres
Bolado Park Fairgrounds	126
Bolado Park Golf Course	36
Bureau of Land Management Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA)	63,000
Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area	7,100
Fremont Peak State Park	244
Pinnacles National Monument	26,000
San Benito County Historical and Recreation Area	NA
San Justo Reservoir and Recreation Area	587
Veterans Memorial Park	36
Bureau of Land Management San Benito Mountain Natural Area (part of CCMA)	31,000

Source: San Benito County Planning and Building Department, 2010, San Benito County Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, 2009, Planning Partners, 2010.

**Private Recreation**

The majority of the open space recreational uses on private land are camping facilities and RV facilities, including the KOA Campground, Pinnacles Campground, Betabel Road RV Park, Monterey RV Park, and subdivision parks that are gated. The exceptions are private golf and hunting clubs, including the Ridgemark Golf and Country Club.

**Scenic Highways**

There are approximately 918 miles of public roads within San Benito County, of which 416 miles are County-maintained (Table 9-3). The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) maintains five State highways in the county: SRs 25, 101, 129, 146, and 156. With the exception of US Route 101, most State highways within San Benito County were originally designed to be two-lane rural highways. While there are no State Designated Scenic Highways within the county, the County has designated three of the five State highways as “scenic highways.”

Many of the highway corridors contain the elements that can make a highway “scenic,” such as the natural landscapes that can be seen by traveling along the highway, the quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon a traveler’s enjoyment of the view. Several of these highway corridors lead residents and visitors to many of the county’s recreational areas, including the Pinnacles National Monument, Hollister Hills State Valley Recreation Area, and many farms and wineries. Many of the major roadways in the county fall within a scenic highway (SH) combining district that only permits certain uses. Other uses, such as residential dwellings or related agricultural uses, are allowed subject to review by the Planning Department staff and approval by the Planning Commission.



## CHAPTER 9. SCENIC RESOURCES

### *San Benito County General Plan*

Figure 9-1 illustrates the location of each scenic roadway segment, and Table 9-3 lists each scenic roadway segment and designation. The following is a summary describing each US and State route.

- **State Route 25.** SR 25 traverses the entire length of San Benito County from the southern county boundary at the junction of SR 198 near King City, north through Paicines, Tres Pinos, and Hollister, before terminating at US 101 south of Gilroy in Santa Clara County. Within San Benito County, segments of SR 25 are known as the Airline Highway, Tres Pinos Road, Nash Road, San Benito Street, San Felipe Road, and Bolsa Road. In September 2010 SR 25 is scheduled to be transferred off of Tres Pinos Road, Nash Road, San Benito Street, and San Felipe Road and onto the new SR 25 Bypass, which will vary from four to six lanes. SR 25 within the county is primarily a rural, two-lane roadway, except for a small section that runs through Hollister where it becomes four lanes for approximately 0.3 miles. However, the northern section of the route returns to two lanes, which from SR 156 northward are divided by a concrete center barrier. This part is travelled primarily by commuters between Hollister and Gilroy. As a result, this northerly segment is often congested. SR 25 from SR 198 to Hollister is also eligible for designation as a State Scenic Route, but it is not a County-designated scenic roadway.
- **US Route 101.** US 101 passes through the northwestern part of San Benito County for approximately 7.4 miles and serves primarily interregional traffic. It begins as a four-lane expressway at the Monterey-San Benito County line, changes to a four-lane freeway approximately 1.6 miles north of the county line, and continues as a four-lane freeway to the Pajaro River Bridge and the San Benito-Santa Clara County line. US 101 has been considered both a statewide- and regionally-significant roadway. Not only is it a principal arterial and part of an Interregional Route System (IRRS), it is also designated by San Benito County as a local Scenic Highway. However, the portion of US 101 that traverses the county is not eligible for official designation as a State Scenic Route.
- **State Route 129.** SR 129 extends from Santa Cruz County into the northwestern tip of San Benito County, where it connects to US 101. It provides access between SR 1 in Santa Cruz County and US 101 for truck traffic generated by food processing plants in the Watsonville area and the A.R. Wilson Quarry near Aromas. The route is also used by farm equipment and slow-moving trucks carrying farm produce. The portion of the roadway that runs through San Benito County is a two-lane rural road, also known as Chittenden Pass Road. San Benito County has designated this route as a local Scenic Highway, but the roadway is not eligible as a State Scenic Highway.
- **State Route 146.** SR 146 is a two-lane rural road (also known as Chalone Creek Road and Pinnacles Highway) primarily providing access from SR 25 to the Pinnacles National Monument. It is a minor arterial and eligible for official designation as a State Scenic Route. San Benito County has designated the route as a local Scenic Highway.
- **State Route 156.** SR 156 traverses northern San Benito County from US 101 west of San Juan Bautista through San Juan Bautista and Hollister, to the San Benito-Santa Clara County line where it connects with SR 152. The corridor serves interregional traffic, including commuters traveling from Monterey and Santa Clara Counties, truck traffic between the Central Valley and Monterey Bay Area during the week, and recreational traffic on the weekend. Portions of the roadway are classified as a rural minor arterial and other sections are four-lane expressways



from US 101 to San Juan Bautista, where it narrows again to become a two-lane expressway as it bypasses Hollister. It is not designated by the County as a scenic roadway, but it is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway.

- **County Roads and City Streets.** The remaining roadway network in the county includes numerous County-maintained roads and city streets. These roadways are classified into five categories, including arterials, collectors, locals, local business streets, and private roads. None of these roadways are designated as a scenic route by the State, County, or either of the two cities.



# CHAPTER 9. SCENIC RESOURCES

## San Benito County General Plan

**TABLE 9-3  
LOCAL SCENIC ROADWAYS  
San Benito County  
2010**

Road Name	Segment Begin	Segment End	Configuration	Scenic Designation		Scenic Resources
				State	County	
SR 25	Southwest of the San Benito and Monterey County line near SR 198	Santa Benito and Santa Clara County line/portion of Bolsa Road near City of Hollister	North/south two-lane rural roadway, except for short three-mile section in Hollister	Eligible	Not Designated	Cropland, rural residences, urban residences, rangeland, Federal lands
SR 129	San Benito/Santa Cruz County line/Chittenden Pass Road	Northwestern portion of San Benito County to connection with US 101 near Santa Cruz County	Two-lane rural roadway, with passing lanes	Not Eligible	Designated	Rural residential uses, cropland
US 101	San Benito and Monterey County line	San Benito and Santa Clara County line	North/south four-lane expressway at Monterey-San Benito County line and changes to four-lane freeway approximately 1.6 miles north of County line	Not Eligible	Designated	Rangeland, cropland
SR 146	From SR 25/Chalone Creek Road West to Pinnacles National Monument Entrance	Pinnacles National Monument Entrance through park to western park boundary to San Benito/Monterey County line	Two-lane rural roadway with passing lanes	Eligible	Designated	Rangeland, cropland, rural residential uses, proximity to rolling hills and mountain range
SR 156	US 101/West of San Juan Bautista	San Benito and Santa Clara County line/SR 152	Four-lane expressway from US 101 to San Juan Bautista, then narrows to two-lane rural roadway	Eligible	Not Designated	Rangeland, cropland

Sources: San Benito County, 2010, California Scenic Highway Mapping System, 2010 Website is available at: [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm), Planning Partners, 2010