

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
HOLLISTER FIELD OFFICE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-039-EA  
FLTFA Lands Sale (Copperhead 1 & 2)**

DATE INITIATED: October 1, 2008

**CONTROL NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-039-EA

**CASE FILE/SERIAL NUMBER:** CACA 50168-17 Copperhead 1  
CACA 50168-18 Copperhead 2

**PROPONENT:** BLM

**PROJECT:** FLTFA Lands Sale

**LOCATION:** Copperhead Creek, Monterey County

**AFFECTED ACREAGE:** 80 acres

**7.5' QUADRANGLE:** Bryson

**LAND STATUS:** Public

**SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREA:** NA

**AUTHORITY:** Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA),  
Federal Land Transactions Facilitation Act (FLTFA)

**LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE:**

The proposed action is subject to and in conformance with the Hollister Resource Management Plan of 2007 in accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-3. The management plan provides “the goal for lands and realty management is to provide lands, interests in land, and authorizations for public and private uses while maintaining and improving resource values and public land administration.”

To achieve the goal for lands and realty management, the following objectives are established:

- Make public land available for disposal that meets the disposal criteria contained in Section 203(a) of the FLPMA;

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## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES

On July 25, 2000, Congress passed the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), which authorized the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to retain a percentage of the funds received from land sales to use to purchase private lands in federally designated areas. The BLM is considering a number of lands sales in the Hollister Field Area to implement the RMP and raise funds to acquire land as authorized by FLTFA.

This environmental assessment addresses the proposed sale of two 40 acre parcels located in Monterey County. Parcel 1: Copperhead 1, 40 acres located T24S, R8E, Sec. 11, SWSW; Parcel 2: Copperhead 2, 40 acres located in T24S, R8E, Sec. 12, SWSW.

## CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL ZONING AND GENERAL PLAN:

Correspondence was submitted to the County offices on October 14, 2008 and no adverse comments were received concerning any planning or zoning issues.

## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

The purpose of the proposed action is to transfer small parcels of public lands into private ownership and to generate funds pursuant to the Federal Land Transactions Facilitation Act (FLTFA). The proposed action is needed to dispose of lands which are difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands and because the existing available funds in the FLTFA land disposal are not sufficient to purchase lands that have been nominated for acquisition in California.

The sale would implement a major goal of the RMP, to improve management of public lands, by disposing of scattered parcels while potentially raising funds which could be used to acquire lands in areas where Federal management for recreation and resource enhancement is appropriate.

## PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed action is a competitive local bid sale of two 40-acre public land parcels described as:

Copperhead 1      T 24 S, R 8 E, Sec. 11, SWSW; and

Copperhead 2      T 24 S, R 8 E, Sec. 12, SWSW, Mount Diablo Meridian

The minimum acceptable bid would be not less than \$68,200, the fair market value of each of the parcels. The sale would include the conveyance of both the surface and mineral estate, although the U.S. would retain reservation for ditches and canals.

### No Action Alternative

The proposed land sale would not be undertaken. Existing management and use of the site would continue subject to applicable statutes, regulations, policy and land use plans.

The Federal land parcel would continue to be available for disposal as directed, in the RMP. Other sales or exchange opportunities would be considered in order to benefit acquisition of private property within a designated managed unit identified in the RMP. The Federal lands would be re-opened to the location of mining claims and locatable mineral development (subject to appropriate BLM regulations for administration of the 1872 General Mining Law).

### Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail:

BLM considered other public lands in Monterey County for possible sale. In evaluating other public lands for possible sale, the BLM considered such factors as conformance with the Hollister RMP, expected land values, market interest, physical and legal access, existing resource issues and information and management efficiencies. Ultimately the public lands BLM is proposing for sale at this time were selected for the following reasons: 1) the lands were identified for disposal in the 1984 Hollister RMP and remain available for sale under the 2007 Hollister RMP revision, 2) existing resource information indicated the lands had no important resource values, 3) and the lands had no physical or legal public access. BLM may in the future consider other public lands for sale that were not considered in detail in this environmental assessment.

## AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Affect Critical Element?	Yes	No	Affected Critical Element?	Yes	No
Air Quality		X	Native American Values		X
ACEC/RNA		X	T & E Species		X
Cultural Resources		X	Vegetation		X
Environmental Justice		X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Water Quality (ground/surface)		X
Fish and Wildlife		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Floodplains		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
Invasive Weeds		X	Wilderness		X

The following elements of the human environment, subject to review specified in statute, regulation or executive order, are not located within the project area: Ecologically Critical Area, Floodplains, Prime or Unique Farm Lands, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, and Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

### Lands & Realty

The Hollister Field Office administers approximately 284,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands, primarily located in Monterey, San Benito, and western Fresno counties. Many of the other public lands managed by the Hollister Field Office in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Alameda, Contra Costa, Stanislaus, and Merced counties consist of small, scattered parcels with little to no public access and are commonly used for unauthorized activities such as illegal dumping, illicit drug operations, and some limited non-motorized recreational opportunities (i.e. hunting, target shooting, etc.).

In 2007, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Hollister Resource Management Plan (RMP) providing guidance for management of public lands administered by the Hollister Field Office. The RMP identified the need to pursue land tenure adjustments to ensure more efficient management of the public lands, to reduce conflicts with other public and private landowners, and to provide more consistency and logic in land use patterns within the Hollister Resource Area.. As a result, the 2007 ROD identifies a total of approximately 46,500 acres of public lands for disposal in Section 3.12.2. Figures 22-27 in the 2007 ROD show where these parcels are located.

The 2007 ROD also directs BLM to acquire lands with high resource values, including biological resources and recreation opportunities, especially in special management areas, including wilderness study area (WSAs) and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). Other management actions, including LTEN-C5, LTEN-C6, & LTEN-C7 (ROD, pg. 3-37), describe stipulations for public lands available for disposal and other provisions for acquiring lands from willing sellers to enhance management efficiency or to contribute to the fulfillment of resource management goals and objectives.

#### Air Quality

Both parcels are within the North Central Coast Air Basin. The North Central Coast Air Basin is comprised of a single air district, the Monterey Bay Unified APCD, and consists of Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties. The entire air basin currently violates both the State 24-hour and the annual average PM10 standards. However, the air basin is designated as attainment for the State PM2.5 annual average standard. The air basin currently is in non-attainment for ozone. Ozone is produced when reactive organic gases and oxides of nitrogen chemically react in sunlight.

#### Surface and Ground Water Quality

Surface and ground water resources on this parcel are determined by rainfall, soils, vegetation, slope and bedrock geology. The parcel is downstream of Copperhead Creek which flows into San Antonio Reservoir. There are no listed water quality impairments to the surface and ground water resources that affect this parcel.

#### Soils

Soil series (Cook, 1978) within the parcels include the following:

Soil Series	Slope	Erosion Hazard	Unit	Soil Survey
Santa Lucia-Reliz association	30-75%	Very High	Sg	Monterey County, 1978

Slope on much of both parcels is variable, but mostly steep. Soil erosion hazard is very high.

### Biological Resources

#### Fish and Wildlife

The parcels are located north of Copperhead Creek, a tributary of the San Antonio Reservoir. Terrestrial wildlife species typical of oak woodland/grassland habitats in the California inner coastal ranges are expected on the site, including Columbia black tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionis*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*) and various small mammals, songbirds, reptiles, and insects. No aquatic habitat is present on the parcels except for extremely ephemeral, steep drainages on Copperhead 1 so fish are not present.

#### Vegetation

The Copperhead 1 and 2 parcels contain five primary vegetation series including California annual grassland, California buckwheat, chamise-wedgeleaf ceanothus, coast live oak, and interior live oak series (Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf 1995). The distribution of these vegetation series within the parcels is patchy. Chaparral vegetation dominates both parcels.

#### Special Status Species

According to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), no listed plant species are known to exist on the Copperhead Canyon parcels. No listed plant species were observed on the parcels during the site visit in early summer. Records of CNPS list 1B San Antonio collinsia (*Collinsia antonina*), Davidson's bush mallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*), Abbott's bush mallow (*Malacothamnus abbottii*), and umbrella larkspur (*Delphinium umbraculorum*) exist for private parcels 0.5 – 3 miles around the Copperhead Canyon parcels. None of these CNPS list 1B or other list 1B plant species were observed on the parcels during the site visit.

California condor may fly over the site occasionally and may land if carrion is available. Although the parcel is within the range of California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) (RLF) no localities are known within 10km of the site and no habitat is known to be available on or near the site.

The California Natural Diversity Database contains some older records for San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) (SJKF) in the Salinas Valley more than 10km northwest of the site, but the steep terrain of the site provides no habitat for the fox.

#### Noxious and Invasive Plants

Typical invasive grass species and forbs found within the California annual grassland include red brome (*Bromus madritensis*), soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), filaree (*Erodium* sp.), and yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*).

#### Cultural Resources and Native American Values

There are no known cultural or archeological resources on this parcel. Expected cultural resource types in this region would be prehistoric activity or habitation sites attributed to the Salinan California Indians or historic ranching and/or homestead sites from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are no known Native American values associated with this particular parcel.

#### Environmental Justice

No minority communities or low income communities are located within or adjacent to the proposed project areas.

#### Hazardous or Solid Wastes

An Environmental Preliminary Analysis was completed on December 1, 2009 by Hollister Field Staff. No evidence of “recognized environmental conditions” (RECs) was discovered.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES: Proposed Action

### Lands & Realty

The proposed action would have direct minor long-term beneficial impacts on BLM's lands and realty program because it would allow the Hollister Field Office to dispose of two scattered parcels that are difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands. Minor indirect benefits would also result from the proposed land sale because the revenue generated would supplement the existing funds in the FLTFA lands account, which are currently insufficient to purchase properties that have been nominated for acquisition in California. Funds from the sale and future property taxes would also provide minor short-term and long-term benefits on revenue for Monterey County.

The proposed land sale would also support a major goal of the RMP, to improve management of public lands, and potentially raising funds which could be used to acquire lands in areas where Federal management for recreation and resource enhancement is appropriate. Moreover, the proposed actions would have long-term beneficial impacts on lands and realty administration because it would assure more efficient management of public lands, reduce conflicts with other public and private landowners, and provide more consistency and logic in land use patterns within the Hollister Field Office.

### Air Quality

There would be no direct impacts to air quality from the proposed sale of public lands because existing uses are likely to continue and development is not reasonably foreseeable. Even if a portion of the parcels could be developed, the impacts to air quality from future use of the parcel would be negligible due to the relatively small-size and remote location of the public lands being considered for disposal.

### Surface and Ground Water Quality

There would be no direct impacts to water quality from the proposed sale of public lands because the only stream segments on the Copperhead 1 parcel are intermittent seasonal drainages that do not support surface flows during most years and development is not reasonably foreseeable. Even if a portion of the parcels could be developed, the impacts to water quality from future use of the parcel would be negligible due to the relatively small-size and remote location of the public lands being considered for disposal.

## Soils

Due to the relatively steep topography, poor soil fertility, and dense chaparral vegetation cover of both parcels, land use from present (wildlife habitat), is not expected to change. These conditions make the land unsuitable for either agriculture or grazing. Therefore, no adverse impacts to soils are expected from the land sale.

## Biological Resources

### Fish and Wildlife

As noted in the Soils section above, no conversion of habitat is expected on the site. Therefore, no adverse impacts to fish or wildlife are expected from the land sale.

### Vegetation

Vegetation is primarily chaparral with no harvestable timber or significant areas of grassland suitable for grazing. Due to the poor suitability of the land for anything other than wildlife habitat, no change in vegetation is expected as a result of the land sale.

### Special Status Species

Under the proposed action, funds generated from the sale of the public lands would be available for future acquisitions of lands from willing sellers to preserve high quality habitat for special status species. Therefore, the proposed action would have minor indirect beneficial impacts on special status species and their habitat.

The proposed action would have no adverse effects on any of the special status species that are identified in the affected environment for the following reasons:

Field visits and a records search of the best available information indicate there are no listed plant species that are known to exist on the parcels.

Field visits and a records search of the best available information indicate RLF is not present on or near the site, so no impacts to that species are expected.

Due to the distance and age of recorded sightings of SJKF from the parcels, in addition to the unsuitability of the habitat for SJKF, no impacts to that species are expected.

Although these parcels are within the range of the California condor, and individuals birds may land if carrion is available, the reasonable foreseeable use of these parcels would maintain the existing conditions into the foreseeable future.

#### Noxious and Invasive Plants

The proposed sale of two public land parcels is not expected to result in significant increases or introductions of noxious and invasive plant species because existing uses are likely to continue and development is not reasonably foreseeable.

#### Cultural Resources and Native American Interests

No archeological or cultural resources were identified within the Area of Potential Affect (APE). The Proposed Action for would not adversely affect archeological, cultural, or Native American values.

#### Environmental Justice

The proposed action would not result in disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on low-income or minority communities.

#### Hazardous or Solid Wastes

Due to the absence of any hazardous or solid wastes from the site, no impacts would be expected from the land sale.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES**

No mitigation measures have been identified.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES: No Action Alternative**

Under the no action alternative, the public land would not be sold under a competitive sale, but would still be available for disposal pursuant to the Hollister RMP (2007). No active BLM management is anticipated. Funds from the sale would not be placed in the FLTFA land account and Monterey County tax base would not benefit from the transfer of these lands.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Cumulative impacts are those impacts on the environment which result “from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” (40 CFR 1508.7). In this case, past and presently on-going actions and activities in the project vicinity include the following:

BLM is considering a number of lands sales in the administrative boundary of the Hollister Field Office under the FLTFA. Specifically, the Hollister Field Office is considering 15 parcels of land for disposal that total 528.96 acres of public lands that would potentially be sold through competitive bid or direct sale

In analyzing cumulative impacts, BLM considered existing environmental information as a relevant baseline for considering future impacts and has not attempted to list past actions in the area. The baseline information identified in the affected environment (above) is considered sufficient for determining the significance of cumulative effects and for making a reasoned choice between alternatives.

BLM has also not attempted to exhaustively list all present and reasonably foreseeable private actions, but has considered a summary of planned development from Monterey County’s *Draft* General Plan (2010). The parcels proposed for sale are in the “South County” area, and the impacts of the proposed sale are primarily relevant or important only within this region.

The appropriate geographic area for considering cumulative effects is based on whether the incremental impacts of the proposed sale would be felt locally, regionally or nationally. The incremental impact of increased water usage, although difficult to quantify, would also most likely be limited to the San Antonio Reservoir. Incremental impacts to biological resources would be negligible because the existing condition of the parcels would remain unchanged. The incremental impacts on aesthetics/visual resources would also be negligible because the existing condition of the parcels would remain unchanged.

The Final EIS (2006) determined cumulative impacts from management of lands and realty are limited to indirect on-the-ground impacts on other resources such as aesthetics, water quality, and biological resources that would occur as a result of land use authorizations. These impacts, combined with impacts from previous land acquisitions and improvements as well as the existing land uses and impacts, would cause localized and permanent cumulative impacts on those resources. These impacts are described in each respective resource section of Chapter 4 (BLM 2006).

Funds generated from the sale of the public lands would be available for future acquisitions of lands from willing sellers to support the goals and objectives outlined in the Record of Decision for the Hollister RMP (2007). Therefore, it is reasonably foreseeable that the proposed action would lead to future acquisitions that would off-set the reduction of public land acres as a result of disposal and even potentially lead to an increase in the amount public lands in the Hollister Field Office.

Potential off-site impacts, if any, are expected to be minor and would largely depend on the public lands disposals and acquisitions carried through. For example, acquisitions of areas with high recreation potential could result in off-site impacts on local access roads. Additionally, land use authorizations, including communications, utility corridors, and energy development, could also result in off-site impacts on local access roads.

Overall, these land tenure adjustments would have a long-term beneficial cumulative effects on BLM's lands and realty program because they would promote management efficiency and improve opportunities for multiple use management of public lands.

## **REFERENCES**

Cook, T.D. 1978. Soil survey of Monterey County, California. United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Sacramento, California, USA. 228 pp. + Appendix.

Sawyer, J. O., and T. Keeler-Wolf. 1995. A manual of California vegetation. California Native Plant Society. Sacramento, California, USA. 471 pp.

## **CONSULTATION**

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## **NOTIFICATION**

Notification of the proposed action and analysis has been posted on the Hollister Field Office NEPA web page during its undertaking.

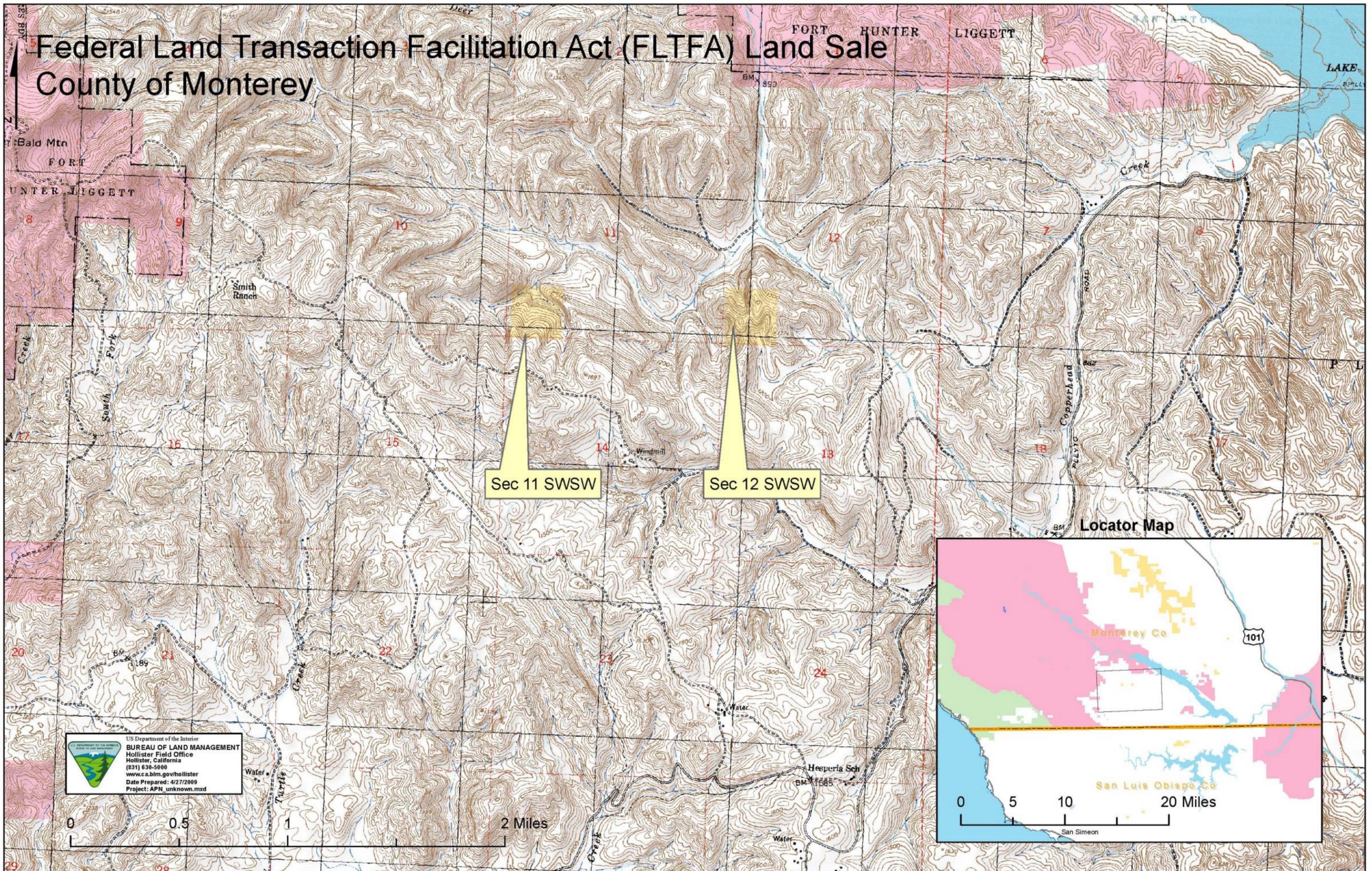
## **DOCUMENT REVIEW**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Planning and Environmental Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) Land Sale

## County of Monterey



Sec 11 SWSW

Sec 12 SWSW

Locator Map

US Department of the Interior  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
Hollister Field Office  
Hollister, California  
(831) 630-5000  
www.c.a.blm.gov/hollister  
Date Prepared: 4/27/2009  
Project: APN\_unknown.mxd

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