



County of Fresno

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING
STEVEN E. WHITE, DIRECTOR

Planning Commission Staff Report Agenda Item No. 2 April 11, 2019

SUBJECT: Variance Application No. 4066

Allow a ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet (maximum of 25 feet allowed) at an existing ranch and youth camp on a 43.6-acre parcel in the RE (Recreational) Zone District.

LOCATION: The project site is located on the north side of Elwood Road between Mustang Drive and Live Oak Drive, approximately five-miles northwest of the unincorporated community of Squaw Valley (6450 Elwood Road, Sanger CA) (Sup. Dist. 5) (APN 158-090-28).

OWNER: Western Camps Inc.
APPLICANT: Roy Oken

STAFF CONTACT: Ejaz Ahmad, Planner
(559) 600-4204

Marianne Mollring, Senior Planner
(559) 600-4569

RECOMMENDATION:

- Approve Variance Application No. 4066; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

EXHIBITS:

1. Conditions of Approval and Project Notes
2. Location Map
3. Existing Zoning Map
4. Existing Land Use Map
5. Site Plans and Course Layout
6. Elevations
7. Applicant’s Submitted Findings
8. Approved Variances Map
9. Public Correspondence

SITE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION:

Criteria	Existing	Proposed
General Plan Designation	Foothill Rural Residential in the County-adopted Sierra-South Regional Plan	No Change
Zoning	RE (Recreational)	No Change
Parcel Size	43.63 acres	No Change
Project Site	A ranch and youth camp	Ropes courses with maximum height of 55.6 feet (25 feet allowed) in the RE Zone District
Structural Improvements	Ranch & Youth Camp: suites, lodges, cottages, offices, meeting rooms, water slides, athletic fields, mobile homes, horse arenas, storage shops, tennis courts, rifle range, dormitory, wedding site, parking Ropes Course: Up to 37-foot-tall poles and a climbing wall	No change Up to 55.6-foot-tall climbing tower and poles
Nearest Residence	126 feet to the east	No Change
Surrounding Development	Single-family residences	No Change

Criteria	Existing	Proposed
Operational Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing ranch and youth camp has been operating a ropes course for the past 25 years aimed at developing self-confidence in children (ages 7 to 16) • The course runs 8 weeks each summer and accommodates 220 children plus staff • Each year from September through May an average of 60 groups (children from ages 7 to 16) use the ropes course 	No change
Employees	4	No change
Customers	N/A	N/A
Traffic Trips	Commercial	No change
Lighting	Commercial	No change
Hours of Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September - May: 8:00 am to 5:00pm; 7 days per week • June – July: 9:00am to 12:00pm and 2:00 to 5:00pm; Monday through Friday 	No change No change

EXISTING VIOLATION (Y/N) AND NATURE OF VIOLATION: N

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

It has been determined pursuant to Section 15305 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment and is not subject to CEQA.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Notices were sent to 145 property owners within 1320 feet of the subject parcel, exceeding the minimum notification requirements prescribed by the California Government Code and County Zoning Ordinance.

PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A Variance (VA) may be approved only if four Findings specified in the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, Section 877-A are made by the Planning Commission.

The decision of the Planning Commission on a Variance Application is final, unless appealed to the Board of Supervisors within 15 days of the Commission's action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This Variance proposal entails a request to allow a ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet at an existing 43.3-acre ranch and youth camp (facility) located in the eastern part of Fresno County.

The subject facility has been in business since 1967 and runs a conference and retreat center from September to June and a children's summer camp during the summer. Over the years, several land use proposals [Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 2274, CUP No. 1545 and CUP No. 1130] approved by the County Planning Commission has added/expanded activities on the property.

Among several outdoor activities such as swimming, tennis courts, water slides, archery, and rifle range, the facility also offers a ropes challenge course as part of children's summer camp in June and July and a resort team-building program from September through May.

A licensing company recently inspected the improvements for a ropes course in compliance with the facility's insurance requirements. This inspection resulted in the need for immediate and near-future replacement of several poles (ranging in height from 35 feet to 37 feet) due to normal wear, excluding those related to a High 'V' (three poles connected to zip lines) and a Burner Bridge (two poles connected to zip lines). The Applicant has taken down the affected poles to replace them with new poles, and will install additional new poles and construct a climbing tower, all connected via zip lines with a maximum height not to exceed 55.6 feet. As, the current RE (Recreational) zoning on the property allows a maximum height of 25 feet for building and structure, the subject Variance is required to allow a ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet. This also includes all 35- to 37-foot-tall existing poles and a climbing wall that currently do not meet the height requirements of the RE Zone District. All existing and proposed improvements are located within the area of the property reserved for the ropes course challenges (Exhibit 5).

There have been two variance applications within a one-mile radius of the project site. But, none of those variance applications are similar to the subject Variance application request.

Finding 1: *There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved which do not apply generally to other property in the vicinity having the identical zoning classification.*

Finding 2: *Such Variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant, which right is possessed by other property owners under like conditions in the vicinity having the identical zoning classification.*

	Current Standard:	Proposed Operation:	Is Standard Met (y/n)
Setbacks	Front: 35 feet Side: 20 feet Rear: 20 feet	Front: 600 feet (South property line) Side: 60 feet (east property line) Side: 2,005 feet (west property line) Rear: 220 feet (north property line)	Y
Parking	Two (2) feet of off-street parking area for each one (1) square-foot of floor area, or fraction thereof	No change	Y
Lot Coverage	Fifty (50) percent of total lot area	No change	Y
Space Between Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One (1) parking space on the lot for each trailer parking space; and • One (1) additional parking space for each ten (10) trailer spaces for guest parking 	N/A	N/A
Wall Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 6 feet in height on all rear and side property lines • No more than 3 feet in height in any required front yard or in the required side yard on the street side 	N/A	N/A
Septic Replacement Area	N/A	N/A	N/A
Water Well Separation	N/A	N/A	N/A

Reviewing Agency/Department Comments Regarding Site Adequacy:

Zoning Unit of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning: The RE Zone District allows a maximum of 25-foot building height, resulting in the need for a Variance to waive the requirements to allow the maximum height of 55.6 feet for existing and proposed poles, climbing wall and climbing tower.

No other reviewing Agencies or Departments expressed comments specific to the adequacy of the site.

Analysis:

This Variance proposal entails a request to allow a ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet (maximum of 25 feet allowed) at an existing 43.6-acre ranch and youth camp in the RE (Recreational) Zone District.

In order to make Findings 1 and 2 of the “Findings Necessary for the Granting of a Variance” (Exhibit 7) a determination must be made that the property is subject to an exceptional or extraordinary circumstance that does not apply to other properties in the same zoning district, and a substantial property right shared by other property owners must be demonstrated.

In support of Finding 1, the Applicant states that the subject property is the only commercial property in the area zoned for and developed with recreational uses related to a resort and children's youth camp. The ropes course will consist of high elements from 35 feet to 55 feet 6 inches, similar in height to other properties that have ropes courses. Greater height is required to encourage participants to build trust in each other, trust the equipment, and face their fears.

In support of Finding 2, the Applicant states that no other property in Wonder Valley like this is zoned for commercial use. Competitors have high ropes courses and the Applicant states that the camp has the right to have a similar course to offer the same type of experience and programs to patrons.

The subject facility (ranch and youth camp) has operated a ropes course for children/youth for the past 25 years. The existing improvements include telephone poles, zip lines and a climbing wall. This proposal will replace worn-out poles, install new poles, and construct a climbing tower, all connected via zip lines with a maximum height of 55.6 feet. Upon analyzing the subject Variance request, staff concurs with the Applicant that the proposed height is a function of the use. By not maintaining a height greater than 25 feet (maximum height allowed in the RE Zone District) and up to 55.6 feet for poles and related structures, high ropes courses will not be possible. Staff also acknowledges that the proposed ropes course is similar in height to the ropes course offered by other competitors in Fresno County.

A consideration in addressing Findings 1 and 2 is whether there are alternatives that would avoid the need for the Variance. The only alternatives would be to either reduce the height to 25 feet as required by the RE Zone District, or eliminate the use altogether. However, both of these options are undesirable by the Applicant. As maintaining certain height for poles and climbing towers is a function of the use, a lesser height that is currently required will make the use unfeasible. Given the above discussion and the fact that no viable options are available to the Applicant, staff believes that the 55.6-foot height as proposed by this application is necessary and acceptable. Findings 1 and 2 can be made.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None.

Conclusion:

Finding 1 and 2 can be made.

Finding 3: *The granting of such Variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvement in the vicinity in which the property is located.*

Surrounding Parcels				
	Size:	Use:	Zoning:	Nearest Residence:
North	1.5 acres to 2.1 acres	Single-Family Residence	AE-5	N/A
South	1 acre to 2.6 acres	Single-Family Residence	AE-5	N/A
East	1.4 acres to 2 acres	Single-Family Residence	AE-5	40 feet
West	1 acre to 1.3 acres	Single-Family Residence	AE-5	N/A

Reviewing Agency/Department Comments:

Zoning Section of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning: Construction plans, permits and inspections are required for the proposed ropes course.

Building and Safety Section of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning: Permits were not obtained for the existing ropes course or the climbing wall and are being operated in violation of the County of Fresno Ordinance. Plans, permits and inspections are required, and a Certificate of Occupancy must be obtained prior to the use of the ropes course and climbing wall.

Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division: In the future, if the operation of the facility exceeds the maximum capacity of the sewage treatment system, a licensed contractor should evaluate the septic system for adequacy. The Applicant should consider having the existing septic tank pumped and the tank and leach field evaluated by an appropriately-licensed contractor if they have not been serviced and/or maintained within the last five years. All abandoned water wells and septic systems shall be properly destroyed by an appropriately-licensed contractor. Prior to destruction of agricultural wells, a sample of the upper most fluid in the well column shall be checked for lubricating oil and if lubricating oil is found in the well, the oil shall be removed from the well prior to placement of fill material for destruction. The "oily water" removed from the well shall be handled in accordance with federal, state and local government requirements.

Development Engineering Section of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning: According to FEMA FIRM Panel 06019C1670, the proposed site is in Flood Hazard Zone AO (depth 3 feet) and Zone X. All construction shall comply with Chapter 15.48 of the Fresno County Ordinance. A grading permit shall be required to insure compliance with the County Flood Hazard Ordinance.

The aforementioned requirements will be included as Project Notes.

Fresno County Fire Protection District; Policy Planning Unit, Design Division, and Water and Natural Resources Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning; and Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E): No concerns expressed regarding the proposal.

Analysis:

In support of Finding 3, the Applicant states that they have been offering the ropes course for the past 25 years with no major injuries and no complaints, and that they have trained staff to run a ropes course, which a licensed company inspects yearly for insurance purposes.

The primary purpose of the height requirement for building structures is to protect the aesthetic character of the neighborhood. Without building height standards, extreme height variations can occur between buildings on adjacent properties, which can negatively affect the appearance along streets.

Upon reviewing the Applicant-submitted Site Plan, elevations and photographs of the existing and proposed improvements (poles, climbing wall, climbing tower), including the property's aerial view, staff has determined that a ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet will not be injurious to public or the surrounding properties. Sparse single-family residences (SFRs) are located in the project area and the nearest residence is approximately 126 feet east of the proposed improvements. The existing landscaping that surrounds this residential parcel will screen much of the visibility of the improvements from the residences.

Given the project is located within an area designated for a ropes course, a 55.6-foot-high ropes course will cast little or no shadow on the neighboring properties. The height will also have no impact on crop dusting operation due to no active farmland in the area, and has raised no concerns for the Fresno County Fire Protection District.

Based on the above information, staff does not believe that the ropes course with a maximum height of 55.6 feet will create a negative visual impact on the neighborhood, nor will it be detrimental to public welfare. Based on this discussion, staff believes Finding 3 can be made.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None.

Conclusion:

Finding 3 can be made.

Finding 4: Granting of this Variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the General Plan Consistency.

Reviewing Agency Comments:

Policy Planning Unit of the Fresno County Department of Public Works and Planning: No comments specific to General Plan Policy were expressed.

Analysis:

In support of Finding 4, the Applicant states that the proposed ropes course has no negative impact to the Fresno County General Plan.

The subject property is designated Foothill Rural Residential in the County-adopted Sierra-South Regional Plan. There are no policies specific to building or structure height in the Fresno County General Plan or Sierra-South Regional Plan. Therefore, approval of the subject Variance request to deviate from height requirement in the RE Zone District would not be in conflict with the policies of the General Plan. Based on this discussion, staff believes that Finding 4 can be made.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

None.

Conclusion:

Finding 4 can be made.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Staff received five letters and one email correspondence in support of the project. The correspondence states that a ropes course at the existing ranch and youth camp will continue providing activities to special needs children, including others who attend summer burn camp. In addition, the project will generate property taxes and revenues for the County and will not generate noise or visually affect the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the factors cited in the analysis, staff believes that required Findings 1, 2, 3 and 4 for granting the Variance can be made. Staff therefore recommends approval of Variance No. 4066.

PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

Recommended Motion (Approval Action)

- Move to determine that the required Findings can be made and move to approve Variance No. 4066; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

Alternative Motion (Denial Action)

- Move to determine that the required Findings cannot be made (state basis for not making the Findings) and move to deny Variance No. 4066; and
- Direct the Secretary to prepare a Resolution documenting the Commission's action.

Mitigation Measures, Recommended Conditions of Approval and Project Notes:

See attached Exhibit 1.

**Variance Application No. 4066
(Including Conditions of Approval and Project Notes)**

Conditions of Approval	
1.	Development shall be in substantial compliance with the Site Plan and Elevation(s) as approved by the Planning Commission.
2.	Plans, permits, and inspections are required, and a Certificate of Occupancy must be obtained prior to the use of the existing ropes course or the climbing wall which are being operated in violation of the Fresno County Ordinance.

Conditions of Approval reference recommended Conditions for the project.

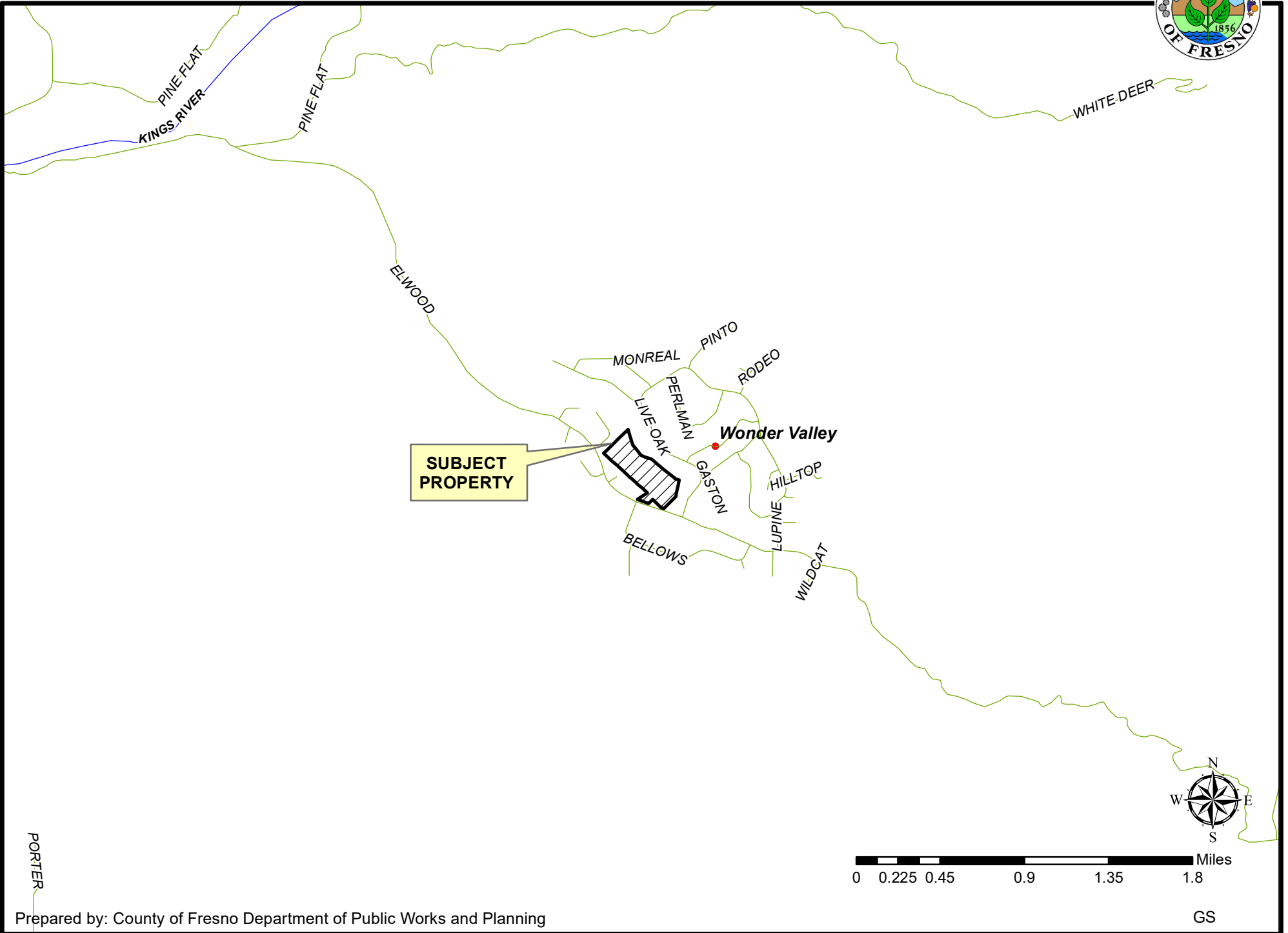
Notes	
The following Notes reference mandatory requirements of Fresno County or other Agencies and are provided as information to the project Applicant.	
1.	This Variance will become void unless there has been substantial development within one year of the effective date of approval.
2.	Construction plans, building permits and inspections will be required for all proposed improvements related to a ropes course. Contact the Building and Safety Section of the Development Services and Capital Projects Division at (559) 600-4540 for plans, permits and inspections.
3.	<p>Per the Fresno County Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Division:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In future, if the operation of the facility exceeds the maximum capacity of the sewage treatment system, the septic system should be evaluated by an appropriately-licensed contractor for adequacy. It is recommended that the Applicant consider having the existing septic tank pumped, and have the tank and leach field evaluated by an appropriately-licensed contractor if they have not been serviced and/or maintained within the last five years. The evaluation may indicate possible repairs, additions, or require the proper destruction of the system(s) • In an effort to protect groundwater, all abandoned water wells and septic systems on the parcel shall be properly destroyed by an appropriately-licensed contractor (permits required). • Prior to destruction of agricultural wells, a sample of the upper most fluid in the well column should be checked for lubricating oil. The presence of oil staining around the well may indicate the use of lubricating oil to maintain the well pump. Should lubricating oil be found in the well, the "oily water" should be removed from the well prior to placement of fill material for destruction. The "oily water" removed from the well must be handled in accordance with federal, state and local government requirements.
4.	<p>Per the Development Engineering Section of the Development Services and Capital Projects Division,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to FEMA FIRM Panel 06019C1670, the proposed site is in Flood Hazard Zone AO (depth 3 feet) and Zone X. All construction shall comply with Chapter 15.48 of the Fresno County Ordinance. • A grading permit will be required to insure compliance with the County Flood Hazard Ordinance.

EA:ksn

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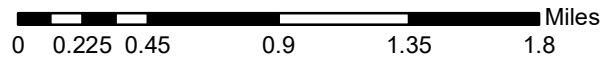
EXHIBIT 1

LOCATION MAP



**SUBJECT
PROPERTY**

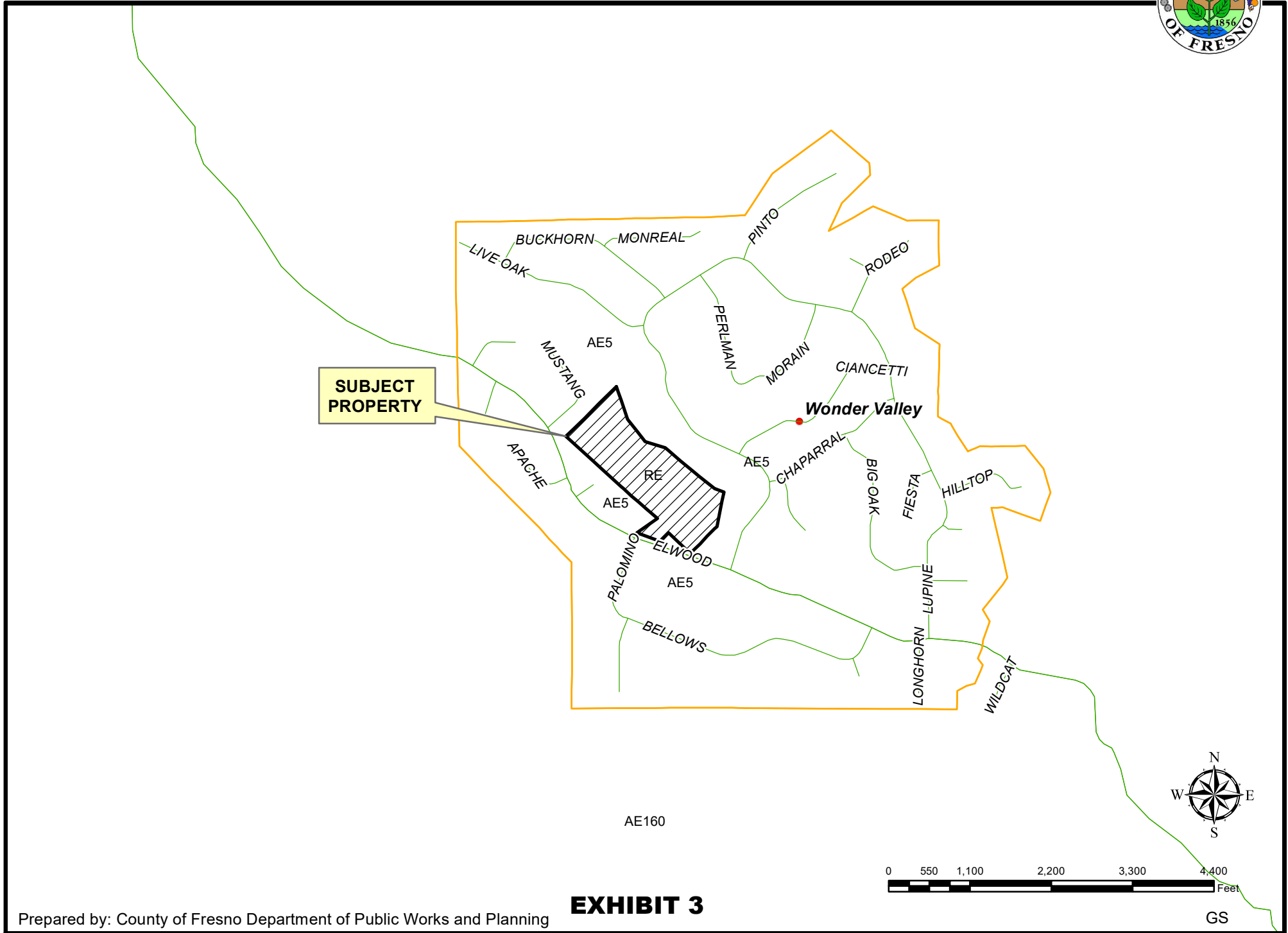
Wonder Valley



GS

PORTER

EXISTING ZONING MAP



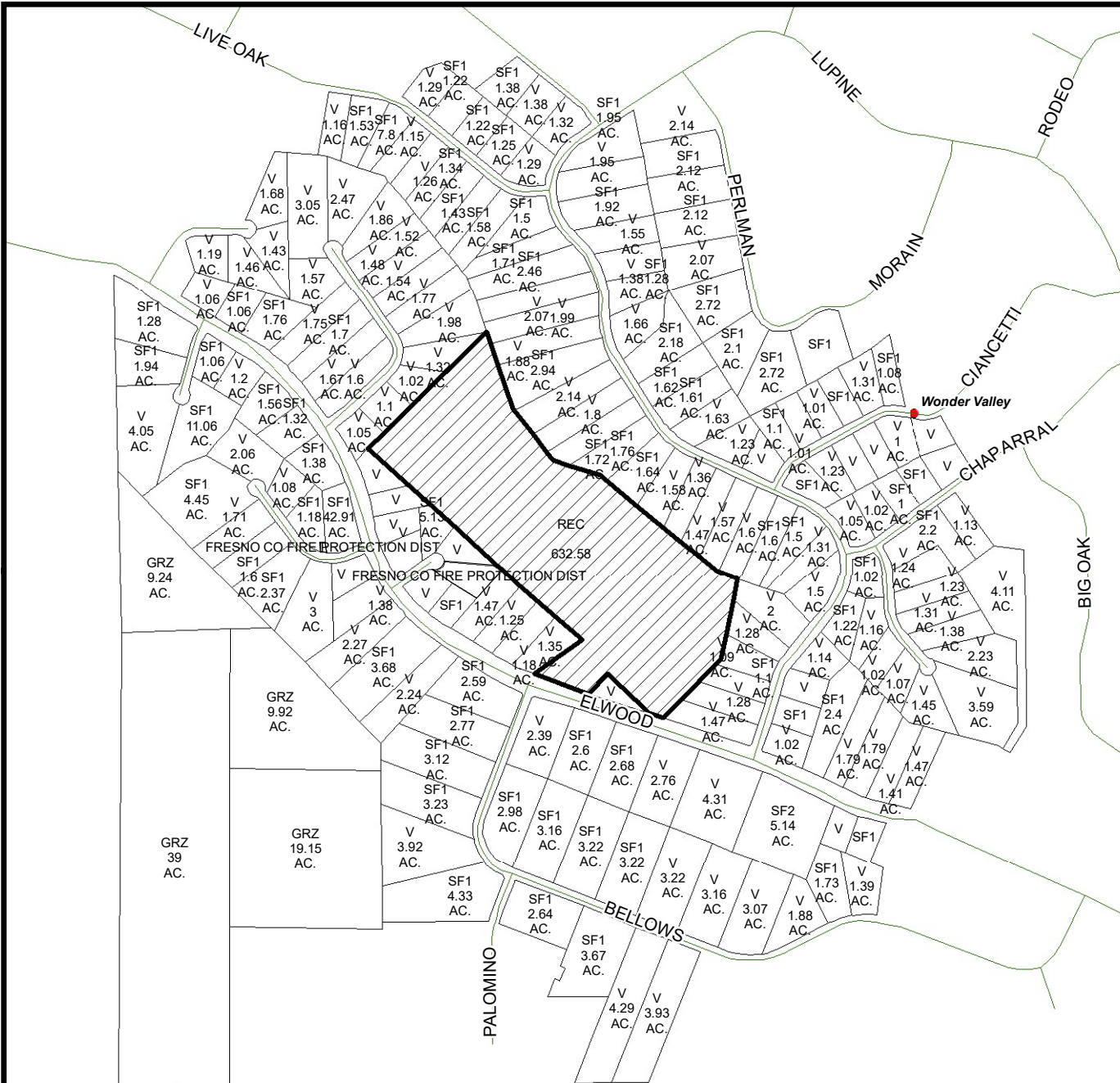
**SUBJECT
PROPERTY**

Wonder Valley


AE160

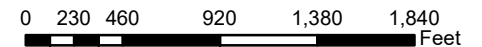
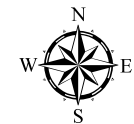
EXHIBIT 3

EXISTING LAND USE MAP



LEGEND	
GRZ - GRAZING	
REC - RECREATION	
SF# - SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE	
V - VACANT	

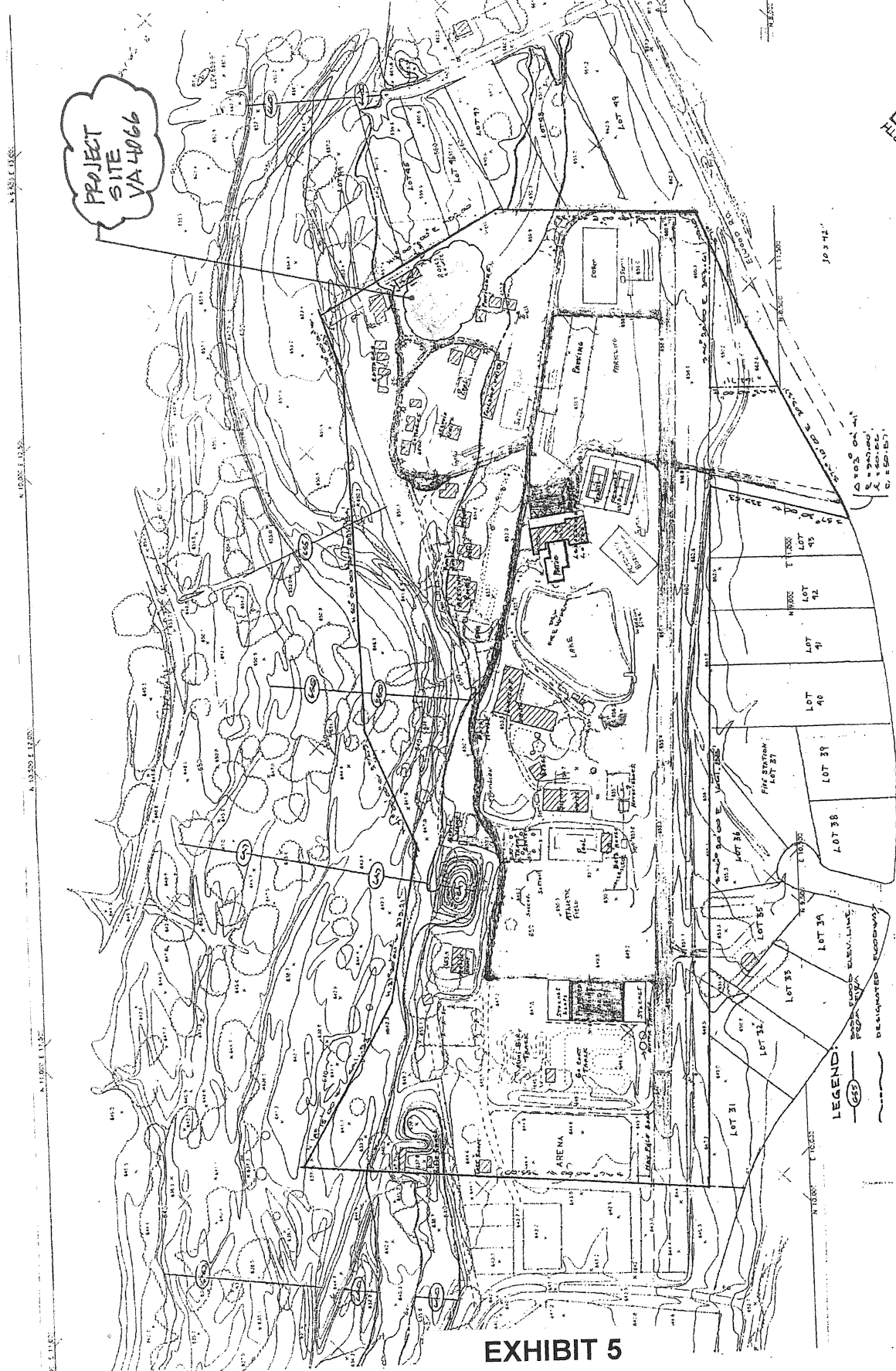
LEGEND:
 Subject Property



Department of Public Works and Planning
 Development Services Division

WONDER VALLEY RANCH RESORT
 6450 ELWOOD ROAD,
 SANGER, CA 93657

PROJECT
 SITE
 VA 4066



OVERALL SITE PLAN

LEGEND:
 ——— DESIGNATED ROADWAY
 ——— PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

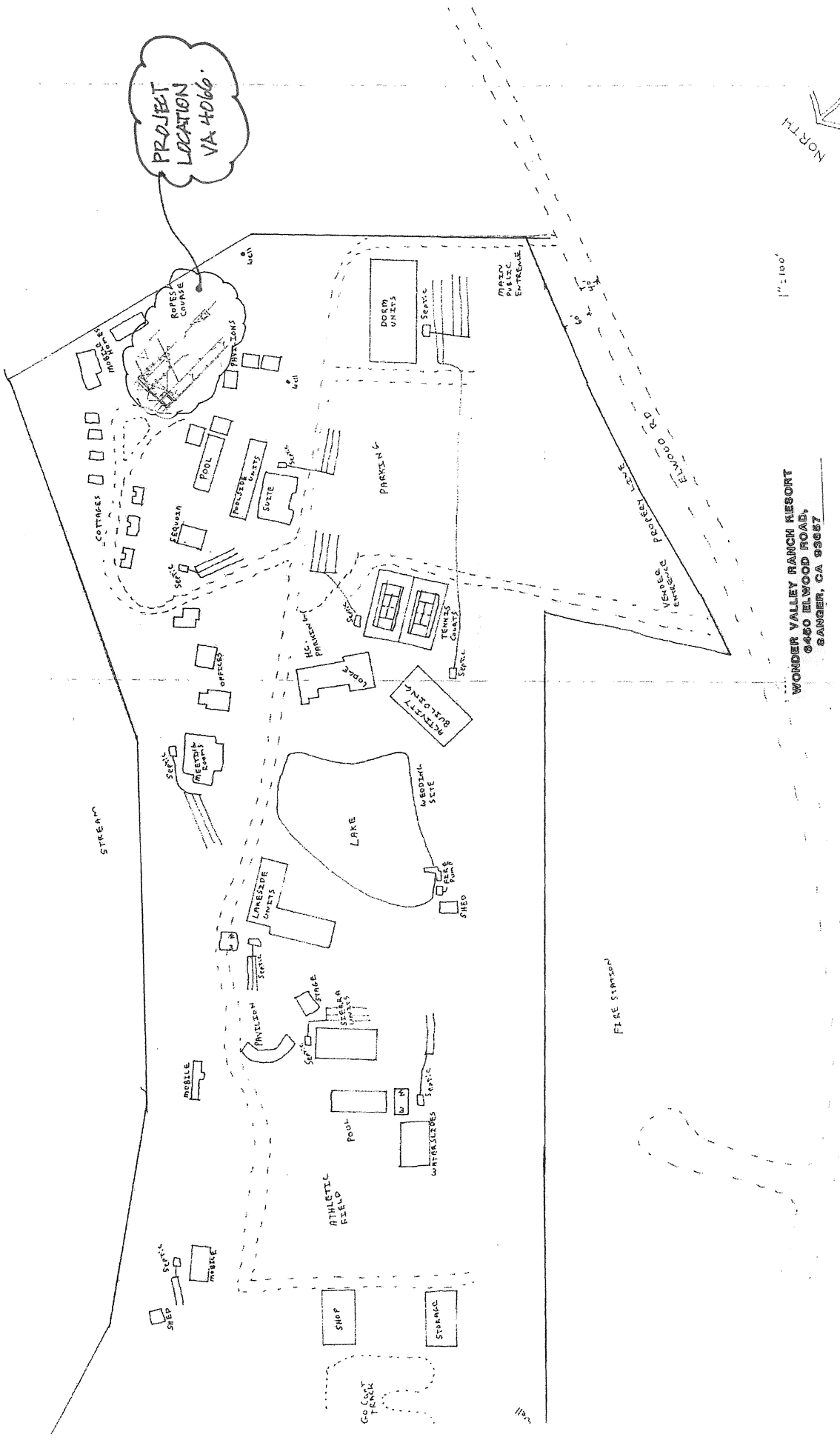
ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES
 11/15/18
 11/15/18

EXHIBIT 5

PROJECT LOCATION VA 40660



1" = 100'

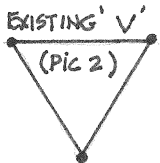


WONDER VALLEY RANCH RESORT
9480 ELWOOD ROAD,
SANGER, CA 93657

SITE PLAN (ENLARGED)

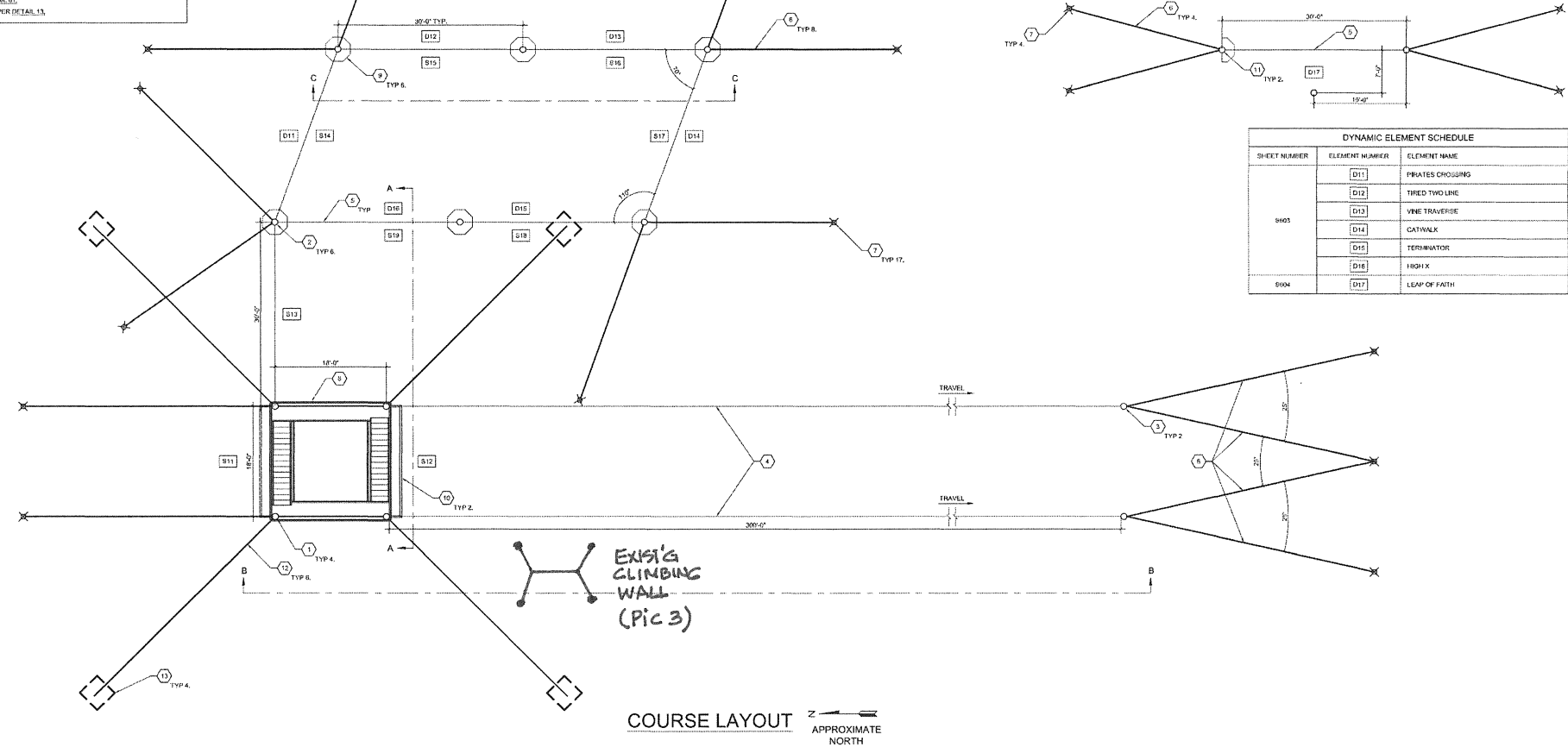
- PLAN NOTES**
- 1) 70' CLASS 2 (MN) POLE, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES, FOR TOWER, SEE DETAIL 11 FOR EMBEDMENT INFORMATION.
 - 2) 60' CLASS 2 (MN) POLE, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES, FOR ADVENTURE COURSE, SEE DETAIL 11 FOR EMBEDMENT INFORMATION.
 - 3) 40' CLASS 2 (MN) POLE, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES, FOR ZIP LINE TERMINATION, SEE DETAIL 11 FOR EMBEDMENT INFORMATION.
 - 4) 3/8" DIA. GAC ZIP CABLE, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES WITH CRITICAL LIFE SAFETY CABLE CONNECTION PER TYPICAL DETAIL 01.
 - 5) 1/2" DIA. GAC RELAY CABLES, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES WITH CRITICAL LIFE SAFETY CABLE CONNECTION PER TYPICAL DETAIL 01.
 - 6) 3/4" DIA. GAC GUY CABLES, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES WITH ACTIVITY SUPPORT CABLE CONNECTION PER TYPICAL DETAIL 01.
 - 7) HELICAL PIER GROUND ANCHOR PER DETAIL 17.
 - 8) TOWER PLATFORM, WITH RAILINGS, ROOF, AND INTERNAL STAIRCASE, SEE SHEET S201 FOR FRAMING INFORMATION.
 - 9) 4 FT PHOTO PLATFORM (SIS PRODUCT NUMBER: PFR04).
 - 10) DELAY BEAM PER DETAIL 25.
 - 11) 50' CLASS 2 (MN) POLE, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES, FOR LEAP OF FAITH ACTIVITY, SEE DETAIL 11 FOR EMBEDMENT INFORMATION.
 - 12) 1/2" DIA. GAC GUY CABLES, PER STRUCTURAL NOTES WITH ACTIVITY SUPPORT CABLE CONNECTION PER TYPICAL DETAIL 01.
 - 13) CONCRETE DEADMAN ANCHOR PER DETAIL 13.

EXIST'G BURNER BRIDGE
(PIC 1)



HIZON

STATIC ELEMENT SCHEDULE		
SHEET NUMBER	ELEMENT NUMBER	ELEMENT NAME
S201	S11	VERTICAL PLAYPEN
	S12	CLIMBING WALL
	S13	TRAIN TRACK BRIDGE
	S14	EARTHQUAKE BRIDGE
S202	S15	BUCKET BRIDGE
	S16	ISLANDS IN THE SKY
	S17	SWINGING 4 S
	S18	STUMP JUMP
	S19	BURMA BRIDGE



DYNAMIC ELEMENT SCHEDULE		
SHEET NUMBER	ELEMENT NUMBER	ELEMENT NAME
S203	D11	PIRATES CROSSING
	D12	THIRD TWO LINE
	D13	VINE TRAVERSE
	D14	CATWALK
	D15	TERMINATOR
S204	D16	FRHX
	D17	LEAP OF FAITH

EXIST'G CLIMBING WALL
(PIC 3)

COURSE LAYOUT
APPROXIMATE NORTH



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE

6450 ELWOOD ROAD
SANGER CA, 93657

JOB NUMBER: 1808

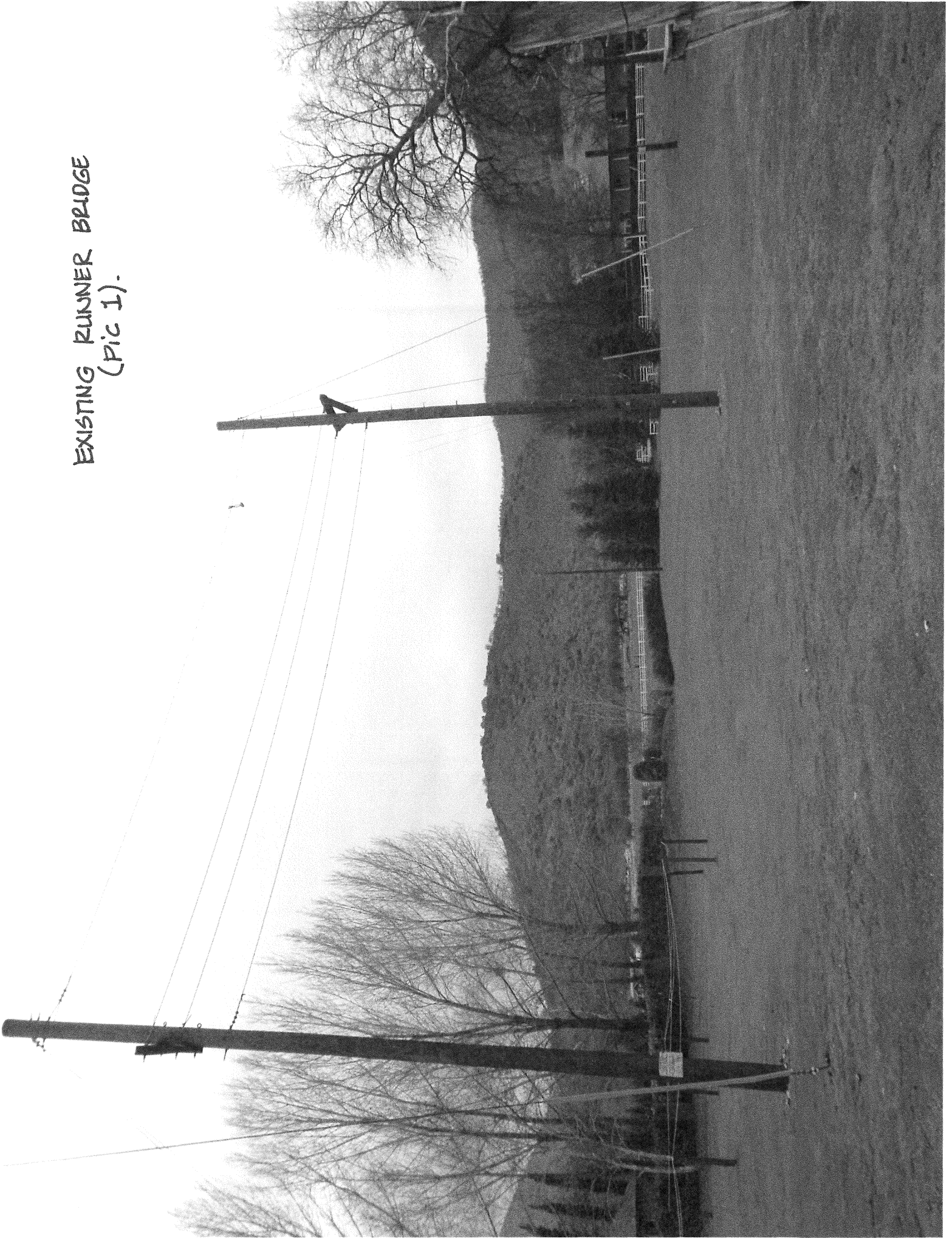


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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	03/20/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S201
COURSE LAYOUT

EXISTING RUNNER BRIDGE
(PIC 1).



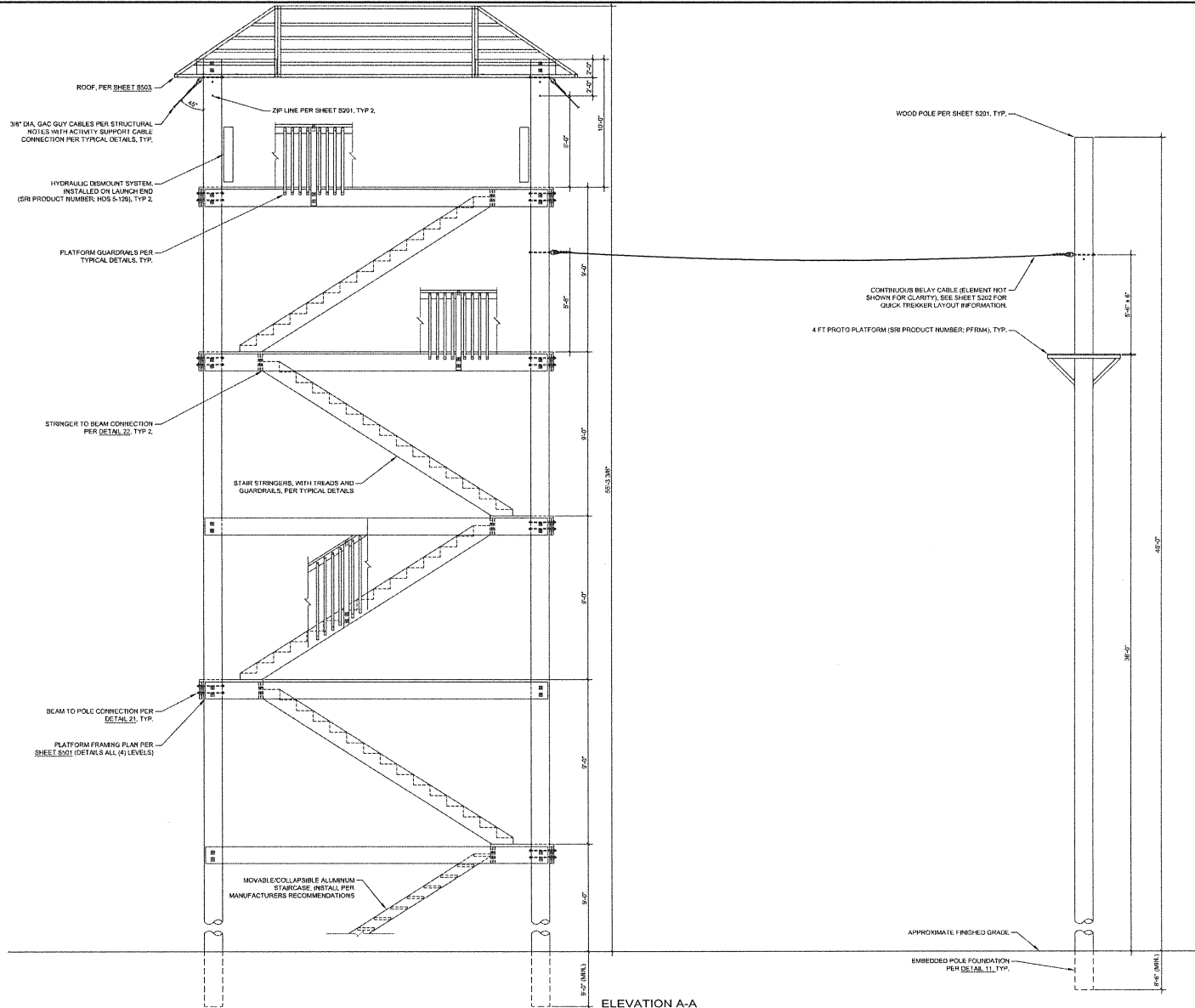
EXISTING HIGH 'V'
(Pic 2)



EXISTING CLIMBING WALL
(PIC 3)



EXHIBIT 6



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE
 6450 ELWOOD ROAD
 SANGER CA, 93657



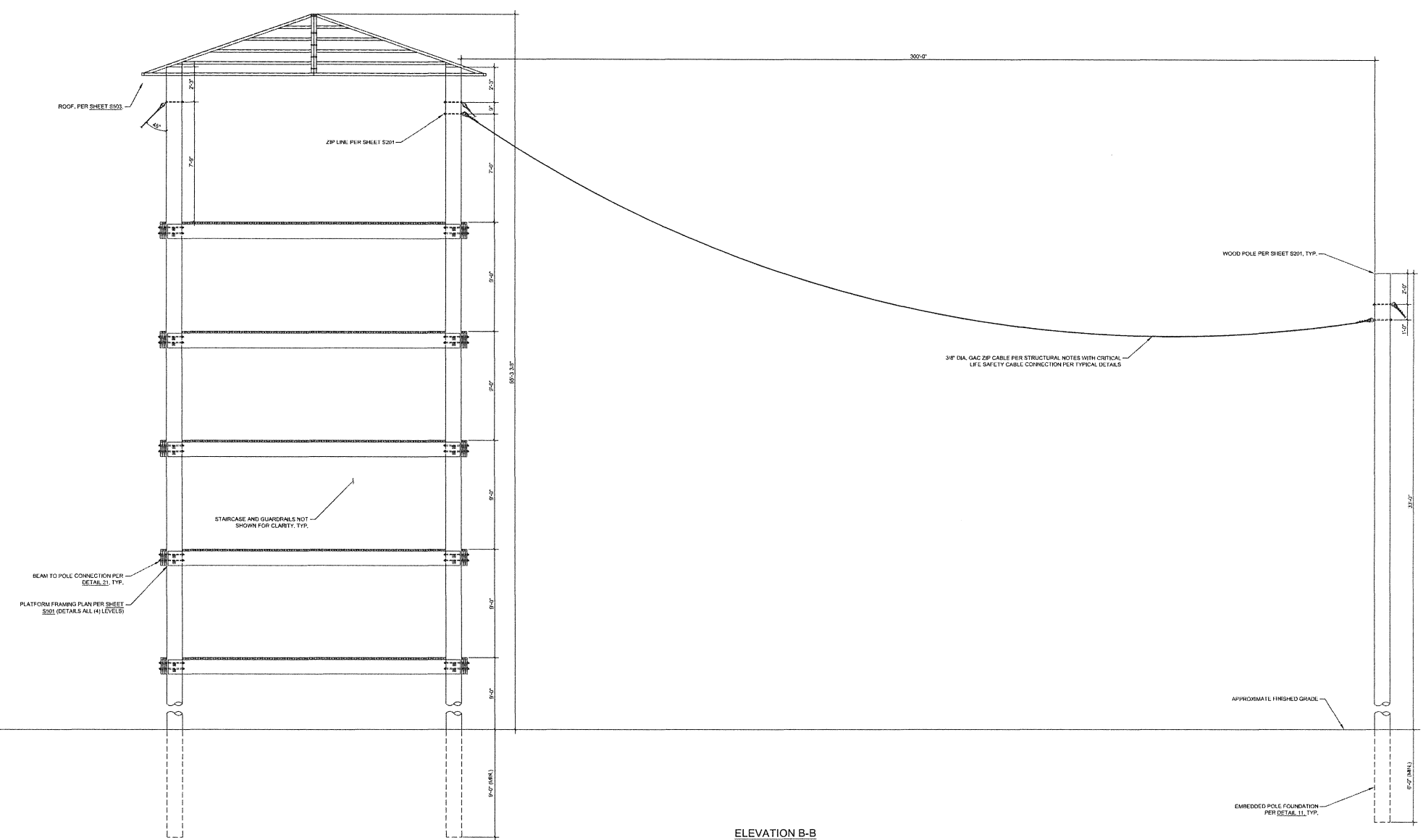
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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	03/05/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S301
 ELEVATION - A

JOB NUMBER: 1808

EXHIBIT 6



ELEVATION B-B



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE

6450 ELWOOD ROAD
SANGER CA, 93657

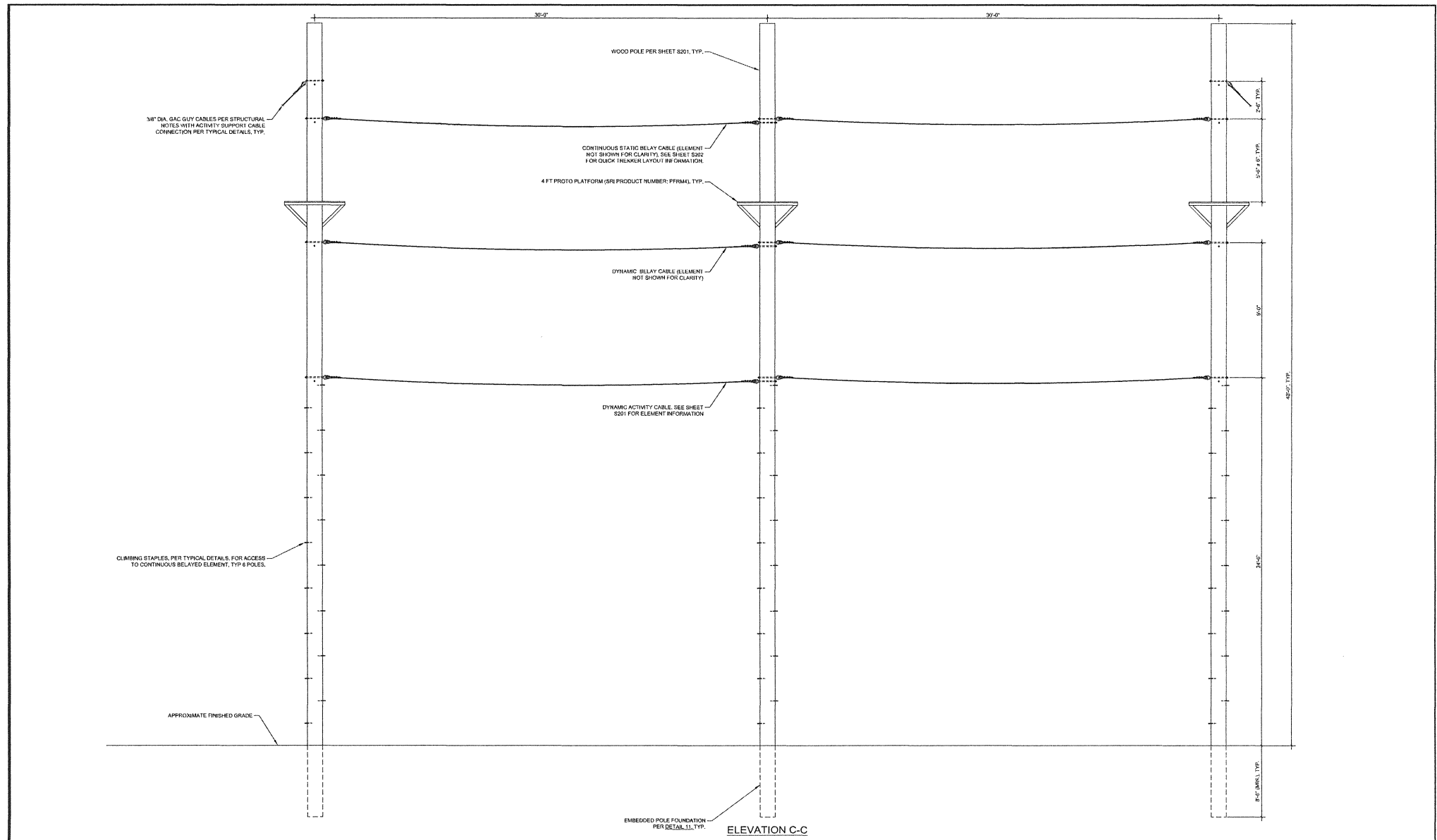
JOB NUMBER: 1808



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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	03/05/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S302
ELEVATION - B



ELEVATION C-C



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE

6450 ELWOOD ROAD
SANGER CA, 93657

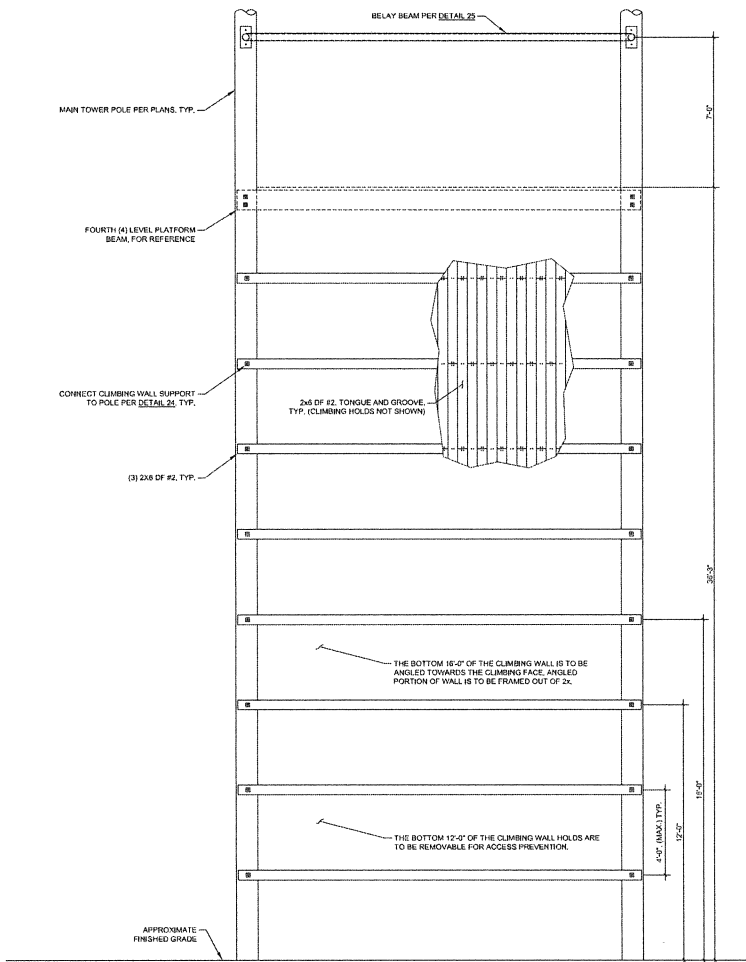
JOB NUMBER: 1808



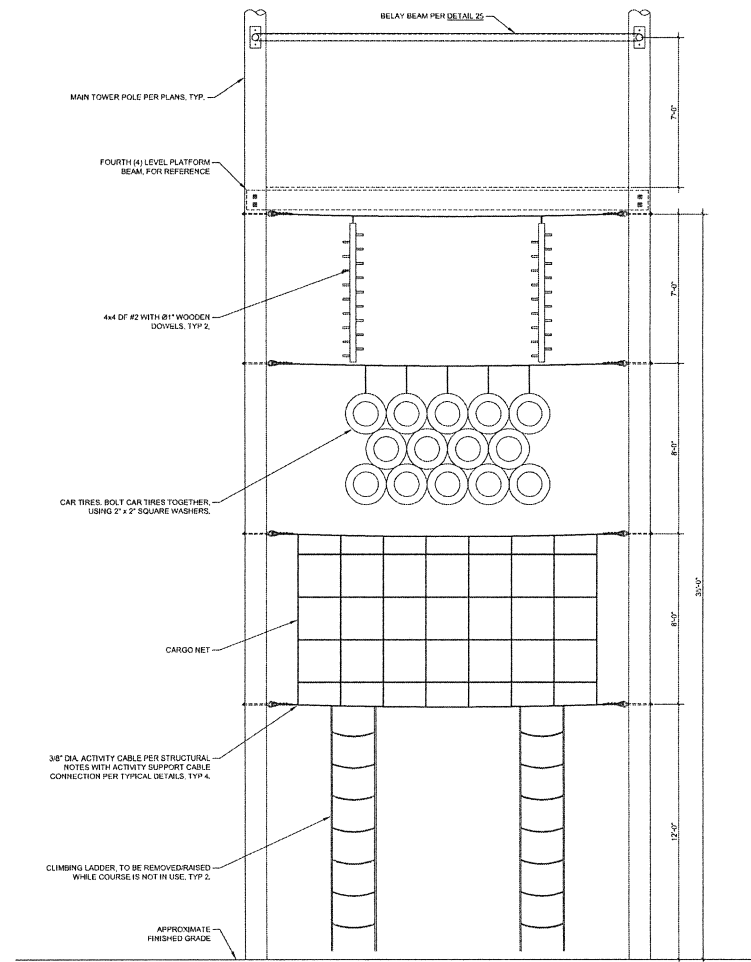
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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	01/07/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S303
ELEVATION - C



S11 CLIMBING WALL



S12 VERTICAL PLAY PEN



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE

6450 ELWOOD ROAD
SANGER CA, 93657

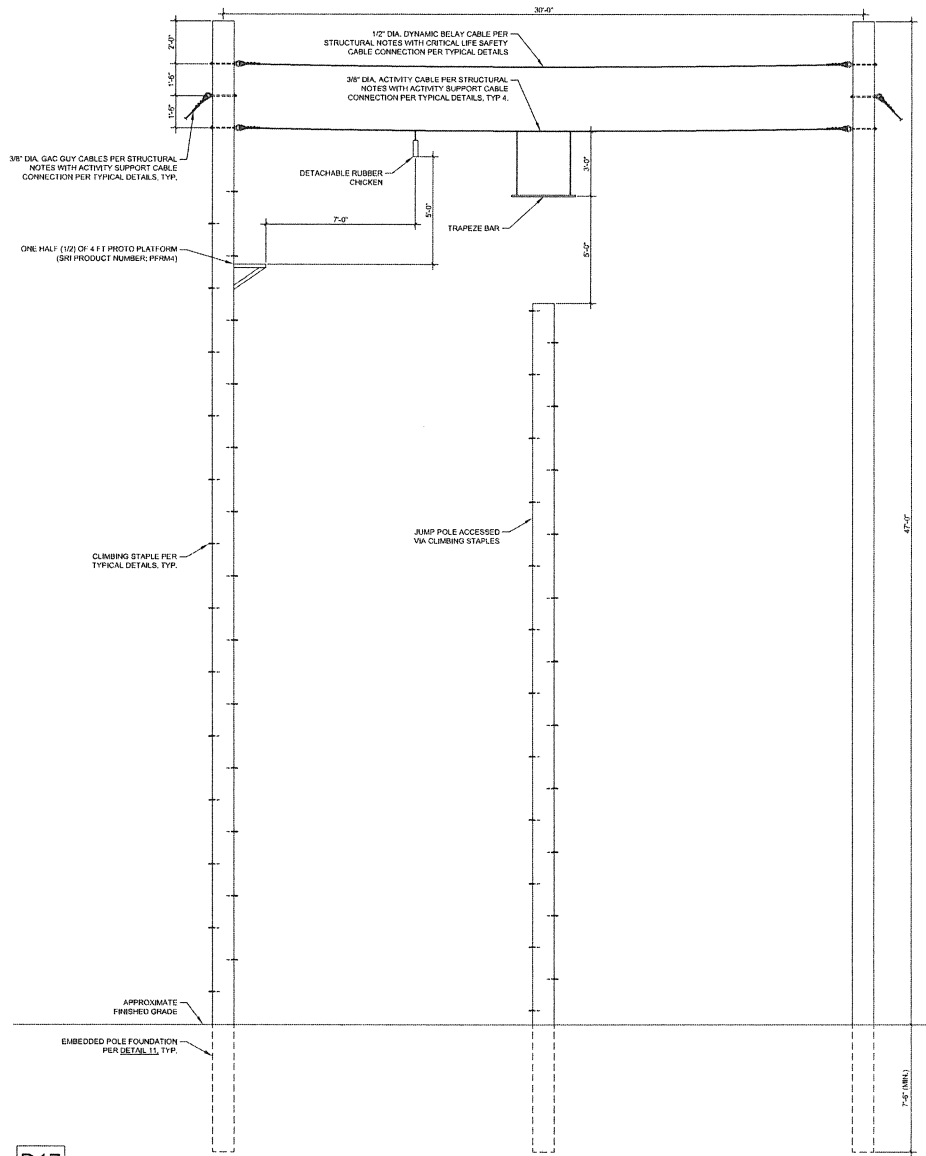
JOB NUMBER: 1808



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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	03/05/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S601
STATIC ELEMENT
DETAILS - I



D17 LEAP OF FAITH



WONDER VALLEY CHALLENGE COURSE

6450 ELWOOD ROAD
SANGER CA, 93657

JOB NUMBER: 1808

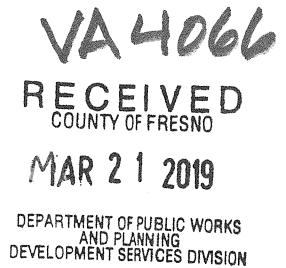


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DRAWN:	MAR
ENGINEERED:	MAR
CHECKED:	DT
DATE:	01/07/19

SHEET NUMBER:
S604
DYNAMIC ELEMENT
DETAILS - II

March 4, 2019
Wonder Valley Ropes Course
Project Location: 6450 Elwood Rd. Sanger Ca. 93657
Subject Assessor's Parcel No. 158-090-28
Owner: Roy Oken
Reference: Required Variance Findings for VA 4066



Western Camps Inc. doing business as Wonder Valley Ranch Resort and River Way Ranch Camp is a California Corporation formed in 1967. Western Camps Inc. is in the hospitality/ recreation and children's camp Industry providing services to guests and to individual leisure travelers, corporate/church retreats, conferences, international and domestic senior citizen group tours, outdoor education, children's camps, family reunions, weddings and banquets.

We conduct River Way Ranch Camp for children who come from all over the world for summer camp. They participate in activities designed to teach children to become self-sufficient, responsible and productive by learning and living together from various walks of life and various countries. This program is conducted for 8 weeks each summer and accommodates approximately 220 children plus staff. The ropes challenge course has improved many children's lives who are survivors of fires by building their self-confidence. The Oken Family subsidizes about 80% of the costs and fire departments pay the balance. The children do not pay anything. Ropes Course is a large part of the program with Joni & Friends who we have been hosting for the last 12 years. We are also starting a program that takes children of first responders and military personnel.

We are a resort and children's camp and have many typical camp activities such as pools, tennis courts, waterslides, archery, rifle range, and many other activities. The ropes course has been an important part of the program for many years.

1. We are the only commercial property in our area. No other property in Wonder Valley is zoned for commercial or recreational use. We operate a resort and children's youth camp. All of our main competition has facilities with ropes challenge courses. Our ropes course will consist of high elements from between 35 feet to 55 feet 6 inches which is similar in height of other properties that do have ropes courses. Ropes courses require height to encourage participants to build trust in each other trust the equipment, and face their fears. It would put us a huge disadvantage with other youth camps not to be able to offer this program. We are asking to replace an existing course that has been there for 25 years. The proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the ropes course. The overall land use is not larger than what has been there for many years. We have a more than adequate parking lot for all our guests.
2. Our competition all have high ropes courses and we should have the right to offer the same type of experience and programs as Pali Adventures, Camp Kennolyn, Challenge Course at Scout Island, Hume Lake and Gold Arrow Camp, Fresno State, Yosemite Adventure Ranch, Valley Teen Ranch, Blackbeards, and Tenya Lodge. All these facilities have nice high ropes challenge courses. Again, no other property in Wonder Valley is zoned for commercial use. The roads used for the ropes course are the same roads that bring guests to our resort.
3. We have had an existing course for 25 years with no major injuries. All staff facilitators must go through extensive training and hold current certifications in order to run the course. The ropes course is inspected every year by a qualified company (Signature Research) and the

inspection results are sent to our insurance company. We have had zero complaints from neighbors about the ropes course over the last 25 years.

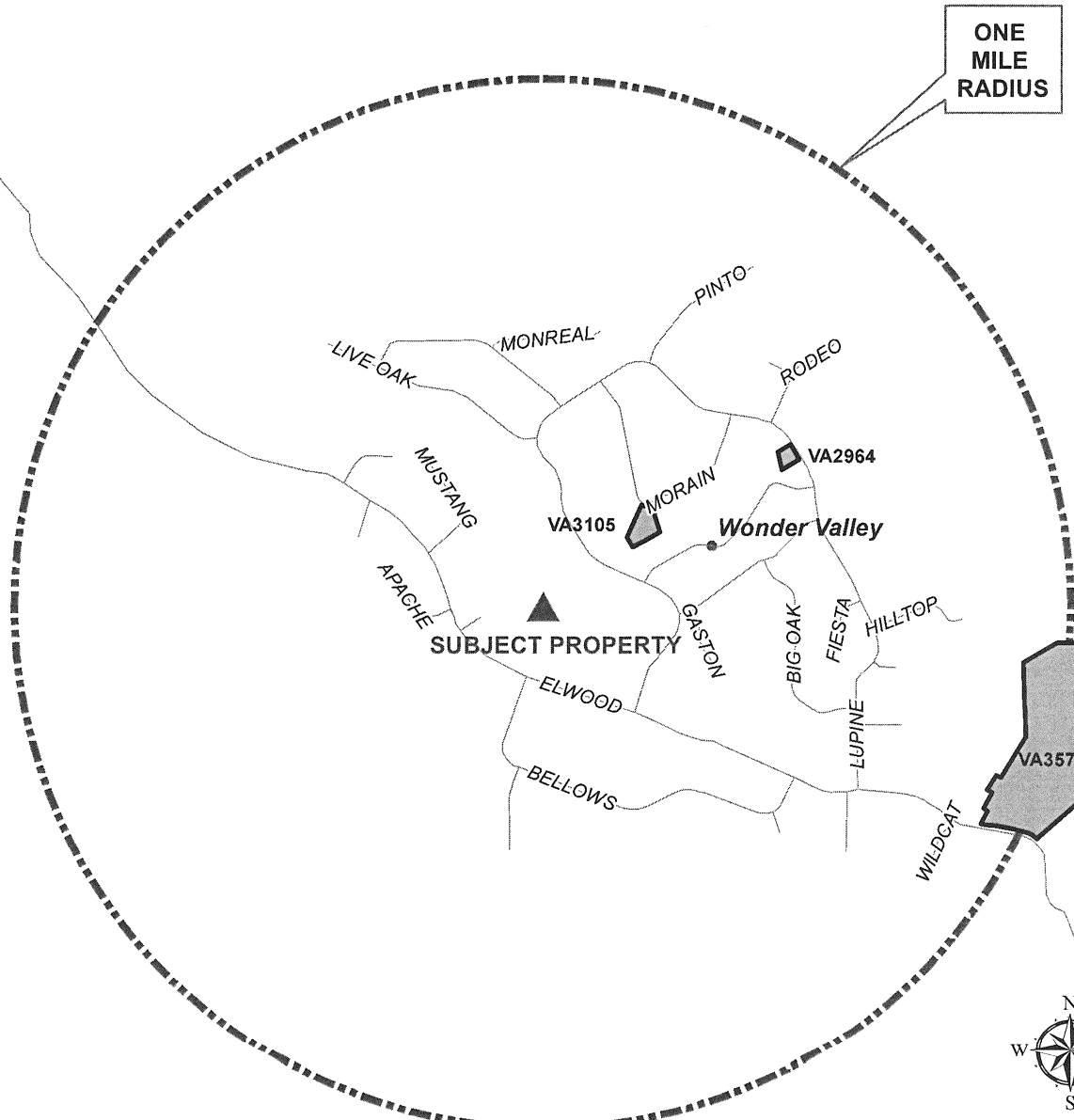
4. The ropes course has no negative impact to Fresno County's General Plan. In fact we help the economic base of Fresno County through the expansion of nonagricultural industry and through the development and expansion of recreation and visitor-serving attractions and accommodations. We employ up to 150 people from the area and purchase most of our supplies from Fresno which adds greatly to the local economy.

VA 4066
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MAR 21 2019
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
AND PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

APPROVED VARIANCES WITHIN A ONE MILE RADIUS



EXHIBIT 8



ONE MILE RADIUS

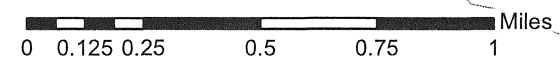
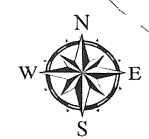


EXHIBIT 8

Ahmad, Ejaz

From: Roy Oken <roy@wondervalley.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 03, 2019 9:53 AM
To: Ahmad, Ejaz
Subject: FW: Variance application # 4066. Roy Oken

From: Sandra Trueblood [mailto:trueb143@aol.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 03, 2019 8:15 AM
To: EAmad@fresnocounty.gov
Subject: Variance application # 4066. Roy Oken

To Whom it may Concern:

In regards to the above-mentioned variance I have no issues/concerns and support the proposed plans.

I am a resident of Wonder Valley & neighbor in close proximity to the ranch & ropes course. The area of the ropes course is secluded & barely visible from off the property. Noise has not been an issue in my opinion.

It has been my experience that the management of the ranch has been respectful & considerate of our community and excellent neighbors.

Respectfully,

Sandra Trueblood
trueb143@aol.com
(559)999-5339
7141 Morain Dr.
Sanger. CA. 93657

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AND PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

4/2/2019

Jeffrey Escobedo
7218 Coyote Trail Rd
Sanger, CA 93657

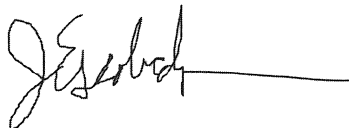
To:
Steven E. White/Ejaz Ahmad
Department of Public Works and Planning
Fresno County Planning Commission
2220 Tulare St
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Fresno County Planning Commission,

This letter is in regard to Variance Application #4066, The possible expansion of a ropes course in Wonder Valley (Sanger,CA) at the Ranch Resort. I have been a resident and neighbor in Wonder Valley for 10 years and support the expansion of the ropes course. It is not visible from the road and is **not** an eyesore or out of place at all on the Wonder Valley resort grounds. It does not produce any noise that can bother nearby residents. The ropes course offers great opportunities for young people in this community for team building and local events. There has been and will be no negative impact from the resort expanding and improving their offerings. The financial impact will also result in a net gain in Fresno county taxes and revenues. There is no potential downside to this new construction/expansion. As a resident of Wonder Valley/Fresno County, I fully support the application and urge you to approve it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Escobedo



Wonder Valley Resident

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
AND PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION



alisa ann ruch
burn foundation

FEDERAL TAX ID #23-7162017

February 26, 2019

To: Whom It May Concern

This letter is in support of Wonder Valley Ranch Resort and Conference Center's request to upgrade their high ropes course at their facility. Wonder Valley Ranch has been home to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation's Champ Camp for more than 30 years. Champ Camp is our annual summer burn camp attended by 130-150 child survivors, ages 5-16, and is held at Wonder Valley in Sanger, CA.



Champ Camp 2018 helped create community.

Champ Camp is a life-changing experience for kids, ages 5-16, who have been treated in a California burn unit or who are California residents. Champ Camp is the largest and longest-running residential camp for burn-injured kids in the nation; we always expect 130-150 campers. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors declared June 6-13, 2015 as "Champ Camp Week" in the County of Fresno in honor of Champ Camp's 30th year of operation!

Campers enjoy fishing, horseback riding, crafts, canoeing, archery, water slides, campfire, a dance, and team-building activities. Challenging and fun activities inspire

confidence on the inside that can greatly affect our campers' lives on the outside back at home. When a child tries horseback riding or a challenging ropes course for the first time since her injury, she is inspired to try new tasks at home. When a child confides in friends and counselors at camp, he is more trusting of others at home.



Kids are encouraged to try challenging activities to build confidence.

The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation supports Wonder Valley Ranch Resort and Conference Center's request to upgrade their current high ropes course. Wonder Valley Ranch has been a great community partner and supporter of the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation, Champ Camp, child burn survivors and the community. We applaud them for their good work and their desire to enhance their facilities for community organizations like the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation.

For more information about the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation or Champ Camp, feel free to contact me at (818) 848-0223 ext. 12 or jradics@aarbf.org.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Radics-Johnson, MBA, CRE
Executive Director

"To significantly reduce the number of burn injuries through prevention education, and to enhance the quality of life for those who have been affected by burn injuries in California."

www.aarbf.org

VA4066
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APR 03 2019

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
AND PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OFFICE:

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA OFFICE:

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA OFFICE:

50 N. Hill Avenue, Suite 305 • Pasadena, California 91106 • 818-848-0223 • 800-242-BURN • Fax 818.848.0296

911 H Street, Fresno, California 93721 • 559-621-4016 • 888-492-BURN • Fax 559-498-1072

708 El Cerrito Plaza El Cerrito, California 94530 • 415-495-7223 • 800-755-BURN • Fax 415-495-7224



February 26th, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

Joni and Friends Central California is a non-profit dedicated to sharing the Gospel and giving practical help to people impacted by disability worldwide. For the past 40 years, we have been devoted to providing the hope of Christ to people affected by disability and their families through our programs and outreaches around the globe. Our mission is to equip the church, moving people from lack of awareness to a movement of inclusivity where everyone is welcome into the fabric of worship, fellowship, and outreach.

One of the programs we provide for special needs families is our annual Family Retreat. Family Retreats offer a haven for special needs families. Here, families are cared for, encouraged, and rejuvenated in a Christ-centered, fully-accessible camp environment. Each Retreat site provides worship, teaching, fun, age-appropriate activities and cultivates meaningful connections with families who understand the challenges of life with disability. Each special needs child and their siblings are buddied with a Short-Term Missionary, who serves the families throughout the week with Christ-like encouragement and friendship.

Wonder Valley Ranch Resort and Conference Center provides the only fully-accessible camp experience within hours of the Central Valley. Our group has been partnering with the Wonder Valley retreat site for 12 years and counting. Wonder Valley doesn't only provide a venue for our camp, they provide an experience wrapped in care, concern, and regard for our special needs families. For families who daily deal with the impact of disability on their lives, Wonder Valley offers a week of respite, relief, and rejuvenation unlike any other.

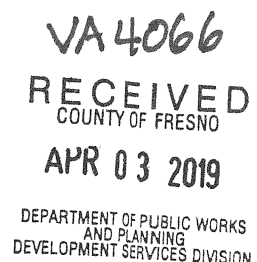
One of the most wonderful things about coming to Wonder Valley, is how accessible everything is for our families affected by disability. One of the challenges special needs families face is that little to no vacation destinations are fully-accessible to meet the needs of a vast array of disabilities. However, Wonder Valley activities are not only fully-inclusive, the staff at Wonder Valley are flexible and work hard to make sure all activities work for all campers. A great example of this is their ropes course. Our special needs campers wait all year to participate in the ropes course at Wonder Valley. We have children with Cerebral Palsy, who have never even been on a swing, going down the zip line. We have teens who are blind, who have been denied access to rock walls and ropes courses at other camps, walking across the high-rise balance beam. And we have adults with autism, who would never be able to wait in line at an amusement park, being assisted up the rock wall. The ropes course at Wonder Valley has provided incredible freedom, access, and adventure to our campers affected by disability. It's difficult to put into words the lives Wonder Valley has touched through their willingness to provide such accessible activities to special needs families.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Humbly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Annin".

Lauren Annin, Area Director
Joni and Friends Central California



Wayne & Lynn Ritchey

559.338.2757 | lwritchey1970@gmail.com

April 3, 2019

Ejaz Ahmad
Department of Public Works and Planning
2220 Tulare Street,
Fresno, CA 93721
559.600.4204
eahmad@fresnocountyca.us

VA 4066
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COUNTY OF FRESNO
APR 04 2019
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
AND PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

Dear Ejaz Ahmad:

We are Wayne and Lynn Ritchey, residents of Wonder Valley. We are very happy to be neighbors with the Wonder Valley Ranch Resort. We have no objection whatsoever to the Oken Family's plans for a new ropes course. The idea of a ropes course encourages kids – and all ages - to succeed with setting goals and cooperation with others. The Oken Family and staff have planned the project with foresight and concern for our mutual benefit to the community.

There are no downsides to this project. The staff is responsible and well-trained in safety, and trees on the property hide the site from view. The ropes course is not a noisy activity, either.

The course has been designed by one of the best companies in their business. Thorough research has been done over the past year to make it a great addition to this awesome resort, one who gives back to the community with camps for kids with special needs and many other community-service projects. We look forward to its completion!

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne & Lynn Ritchey

April 3, 2019

Steven E. White, Director
Department of Public Works & Planning
Secretary – Fresno County Planning Commission
2220 Tulare Street
Fresno, CA 93721
Ph: 559-600-4204

Re: Variance Application No. 4066

Dear Steven E. White and Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing you on behalf of the Wonder Valley Ranch Resort, whom will participate in a public hearing on April 11th, 2019 regarding the construction of their proposed Ropes Course project.

I am a resident of Wonder Valley and I have lived within immediate proximity of the resort for the past 12 years. In this time I have never experienced an issue with noise or visual distractions from their existing Ropes Course Elements. I do not foresee any negative impact caused by the construction of a new course in the existing location, regardless of the height a new course may be placed at.

With regard to the community as a whole, residents in fact welcome this new opportunity for the area, as the continued growth and development of the resort provide direct benefits to our neighborhood. These benefits include, but are not limited to, potential employment opportunities and community “play days” as we have experienced in the past. Additionally, the Ropes Course is utilized by individuals in the area for their own company and staff teambuilding experiences. We are grateful for the access to such a structure, and we are excited about the new changes and opportunities this will bring in the future.

Thank you for your consideration and your support on this project.

Sincerely,

Stacey Roberts
Wonder Valley Resident
7233 Coyote Trail Road
Sanger, CA 93657
559-304-6852

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