

# Mono County Land Holdings

A preliminary survey and analysis of undeveloped and under-developed property  
in which the County of Mono has or may have an ownership interest

# Context

- ASSIGNMENT: Review list of County-owned property compiled by County staff and *“see what jumps out at you; what the County might do with it.”*
- SUBTEXT: Later, some members of the Board of Supervisors and the new CAO expressed specific interest in looking at County-owned land for potential housing.
- COMPLETED: December 16, 2019

# NO Silver Bullets

- Limited (if any) immediate housing opportunities.
- Scarcity of parcels prime for economic development.
- Current land use constraints

But . . .

**INFORMATION & IDEAS!!!**



# Methodology: Bon Mots & Caveats

***“The map is not the territory.”***

Alfred Korzybski, Independent Scholar and Pioneer in the Field of General Semantics

***“It’s not worth a penny unless you are willing to do something with it.”***

Michael S. Conklin, Inyo County Deputy Public Works Director (retired)

***“I don’t know what I don’t know”***

Me

1. Source Information spreadsheet updated to add key information
2. Most parcels evaluated virtually (online with ParcelViewer), only incidental in-person site visits
3. NO appraisals or economic analysis
4. NO title reports; limited review of property deeds
  - County ownership presumed, but appears unlikely in some instances
5. Absence of over-arching County real property management policy

# Information: Overview

**PARCELS:** 193

**ACREAGE:** 1,598 acres

**OPEN SPACE:** 737 acres (46%)

**AGRICULTURE:** 220 acres (14%)

**MOSTLY DEVELOPED:** 95 acres

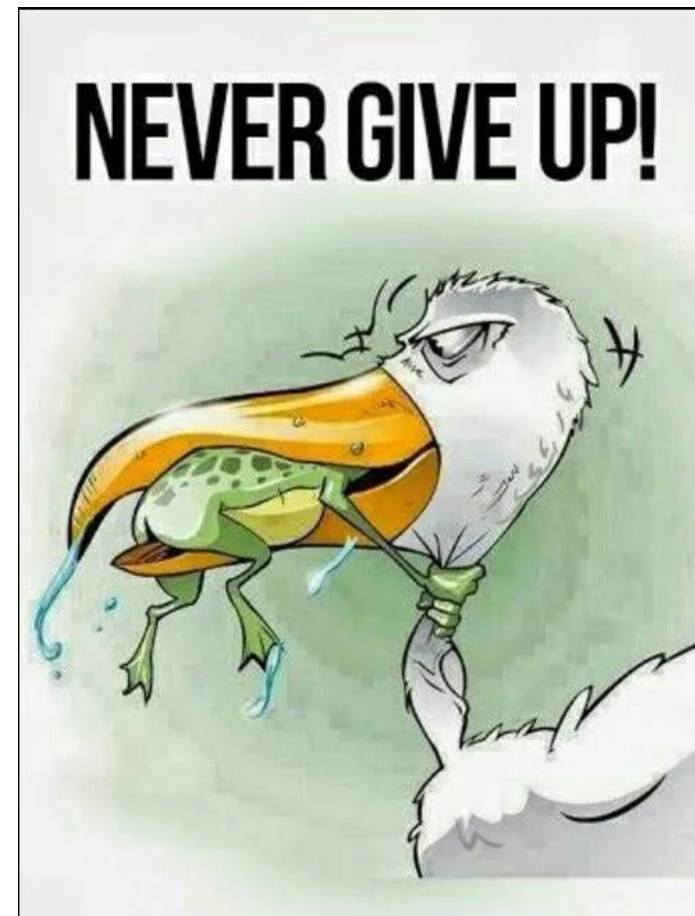
**PARTIALLY DEVELOPED/DISTURBED:** 301 acres

**DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES:** 77 acres

# Information: Overview

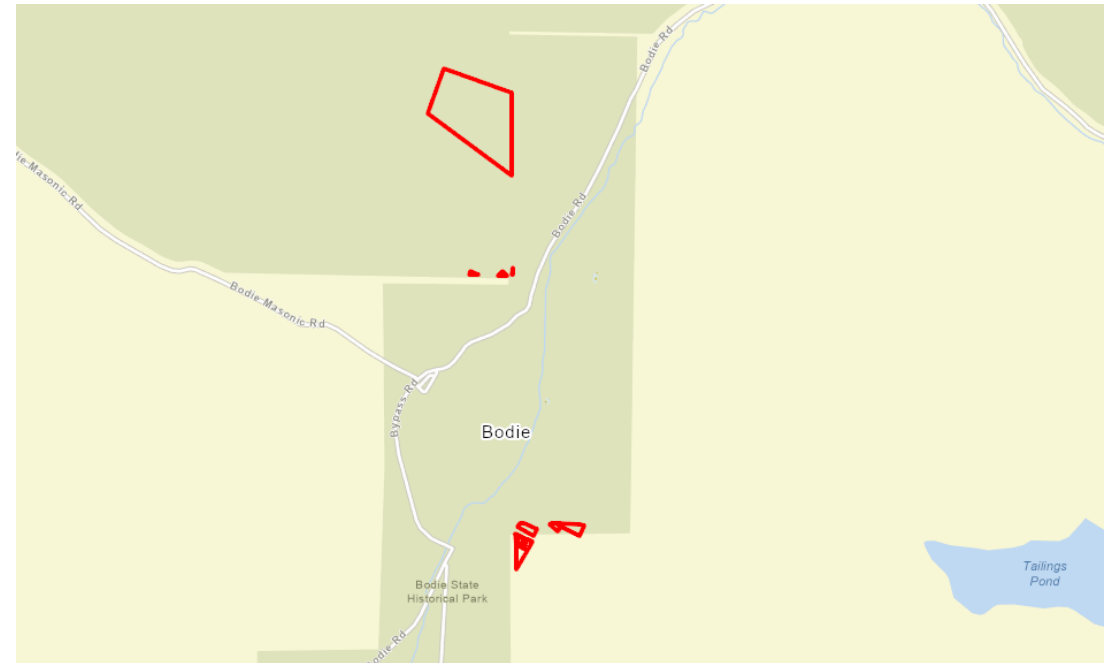
	DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5
Parcels	1	12	117	61	2*
Acreage	1.57	115.21	1,056.81	407.51	16.42
% of County Holdings	0.10%	7.21%	66.15%	25.51%	1.03%
Open Space	0 acres	0 acres	666.97 acres	70.13 acres	0 acres
Agriculture	0 acres	0 acres	171.74 acres	48.50 acres	0 acres
Mostly Developed	1.57 acres	13.05 acres	8.50 acres	66.94 acres	4.47 acres
Partially Developed	0 acres	23.42 acres	50.16 acres	215.91 acres	11.95 acres
Development Possibilities	0 acres	76.83 acres	**	**	0 acres

# Philosophies on Ideas



# Idea: Acquire Bodie Parcels for Land Trade

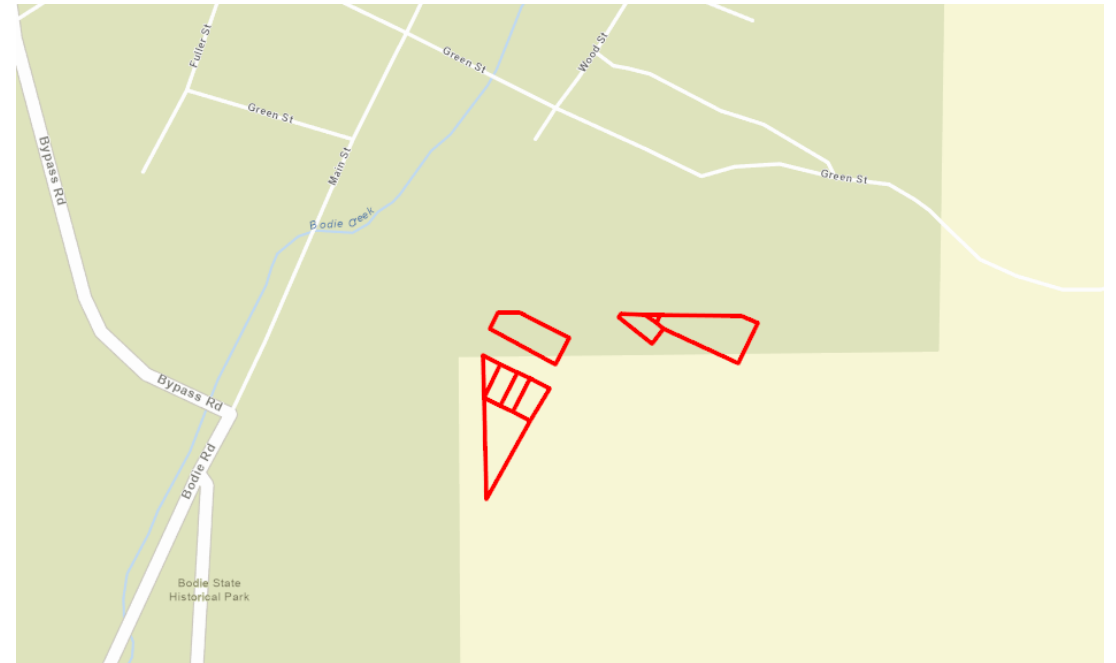
- 13, mostly small and irregularly-shaped parcels totaling 15.35 acres
- Appear to be in Mono County Superior Court receivership, not owned by County
  - Possibly unclaimed land grants
- Does process exist for County to acquire from Court?
- Potential trade with State or BLM





# Bodie: Possible Next Steps

1. Confirm Court's relationship to parcels and determine if divestment process exists
2. If mechanism exists for County to acquire parcels, publicly deliberate possible acquisition, and establish thresholds for the effort
3. Appraise parcels
4. Evaluate highest and best means of disposal
  - land trade, sale through auction or sealed bid, development through RFP



# Idea: Community Power Aggregation Sites

- County owns several relatively large parcels used as transfer station sites or borrow pits
- May be underutilized and able to accommodate other uses
- Could be used for small renewable energy projects to provide electricity to nearby communities or facilities.
- Are transfer stations closed landfill sites? Road Department ownership and needs?

Community	Address	Acreage	Description
Benton	92 Christie Lane	10.00	Benton Transfer Station
Bridgeport	50 Garbage Pit Road	37.61	Bridgeport Transfer Station
Chalfant	500 Locust Street	10.07	Chalfant Transfer Station
Walker	280 Offal Road	41.81	Walker Transfer Station

# Community Power Sites: Possible Next Steps

1. Determine if plans (e.g., landfill closure plans and borrow pit reclamation plans) and related requirements for each parcel allow, or can be modified to allow energy generation projects
2. Explore Board of Supervisors' and communities' interest in concurrent or other uses for these parcels
3. If interest and ability exists for community power aggregation purposes, conduct a feasibility analyses for locating various renewable energy technologies on the sites
4. Become familiar with the community power aggregation process

# Idea: Whitmore Substation Site for Housing

- Two adjacent parcels totaling 3.35 acres south of 203
- Closest parcel to Mammoth with potential for affordable housing
- Access to water needs to be established
  - anecdotal
  - red-tagged well on property
  - deed not readily available
- Tank farm a potential incompatible use



# Whitmore Substation: Possible Next Steps

1. Obtain a title report, and locate and review the deeds for the parcels to determine the County's property rights, including water rights, and any encumbrances on the property
2. If water rights have been reserved, explore the feasibility and cost of obtaining and conveying water from a nearby property owner or MCWD
3. Review the lease or other agreements the County has with current tenants
4. Seek community input regarding potential uses for the property
5. Appraise the parcels
6. Evaluate foreseeable public purposes for the property as well as methods of possible disposal including land trades, sale through public auction or sealed bid, or development through an RFP

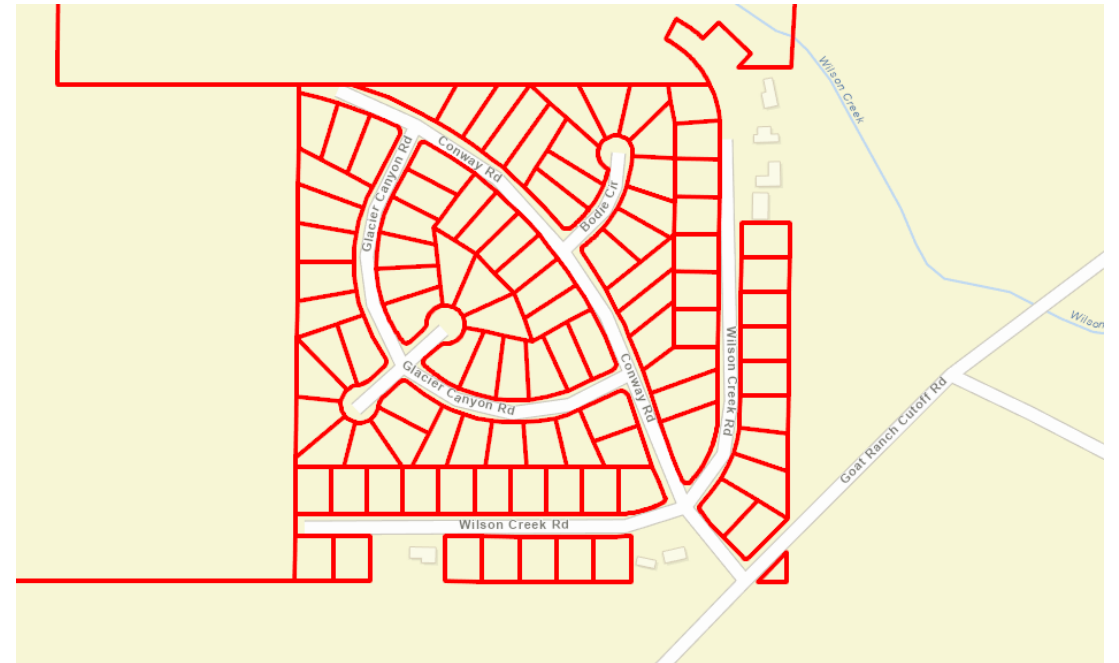
# Idea: Mono City Housing Lots+

- 111 parcels, totaling 1,002.22 acres, in and around Mono City:
  - 171.74-acre parcel with Agriculture land use designation west of 395
  - 159.44-acre parcel zoned Resource Management 15-miles east on 167
  - 108 parcels, totaling 667.97 acres, making up Conway Ranch Conservation Easement



# Idea: Mono City Housing Lots+ continued

- Conway Ranch Conservation Easement includes a 29.43-acre sub-division (with streets and, presumably, utilities)
  - **101 parcels ranging in size from 0.27-acres to 0.45 acres**
- Easement is complex and likely politically vexing and legally challenging, but . . .



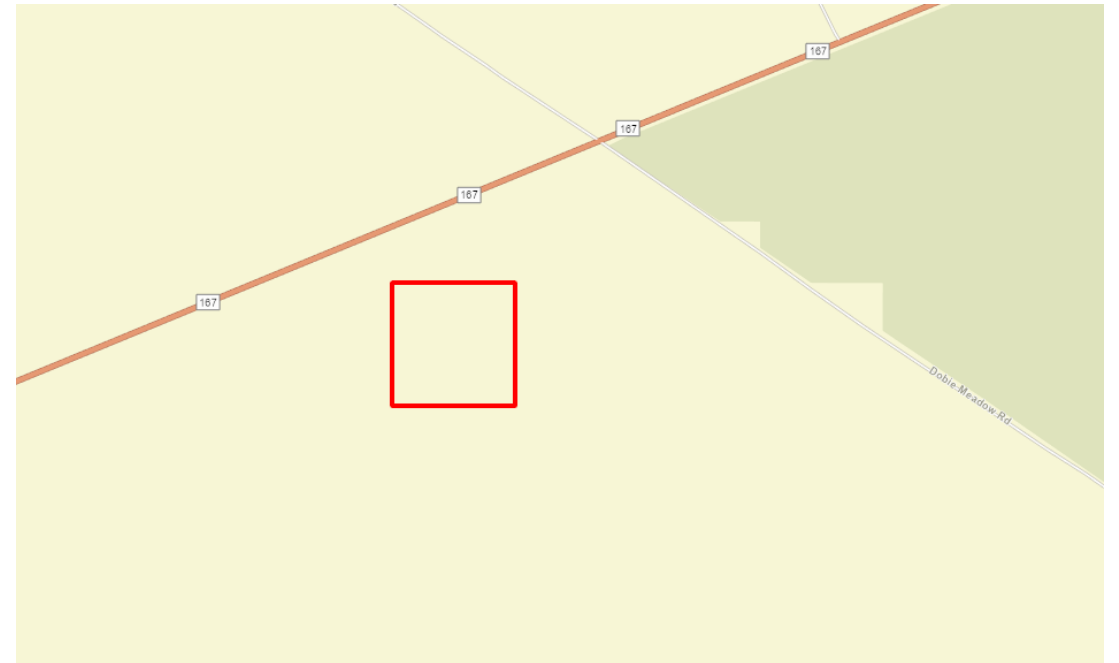
# Idea: Mono City Housing Lots+ continued

- If these subdivided parcels can be separated from Conservation Easement, they provide a ready-made housing opportunity in geographic center of the county
- Two possible approaches:
  - Trade 29.43-acre sub-division for the 159.44-acre Resource Management parcel to the east
  - “Buy-back” 29.43-acres
- Hypothetical buy-back, if total *cost* of easement is \$10 million
  - 29.43 acres represents roughly 4.5% (+/-) of 667.97-acre conservation easement
  - 4.5% of \$10 million = \$450,00
  - \$450,000 / 100-parcels = \$4,500 per parcel minimum bid at auction or through sealed bid process
- Stymie speculation by keeping lots in escrow until building permits issued, etc.



# Idea: Mono City Housing Lots+ continued

- 159.44-acre Resource Management parcel to east presents other opportunities:
  - Land trade with BLM which manages federally-owned parcel to the north
  - Sale through auction or sealed bid (parcels to east and west are privately owned)
  - Future landfill site?



# Idea: Mono City Housing Lots+ continued

- **If** Conservation Easement and Open Space designation still allow commercial aquaculture activities, consider revisiting fish rearing activities.
  - Control destiny and maintain Mono County's market share as a preeminent fishing destination in face of fluctuating CDFW fish stocking practices
- Explore formation of JPA with Inyo County as means of sharing costs
  - Inyo may have opportunity to acquire Historic Mount Whitney Fish Hatchery, allowing it to consider pursuing a similar fish rearing endeavor



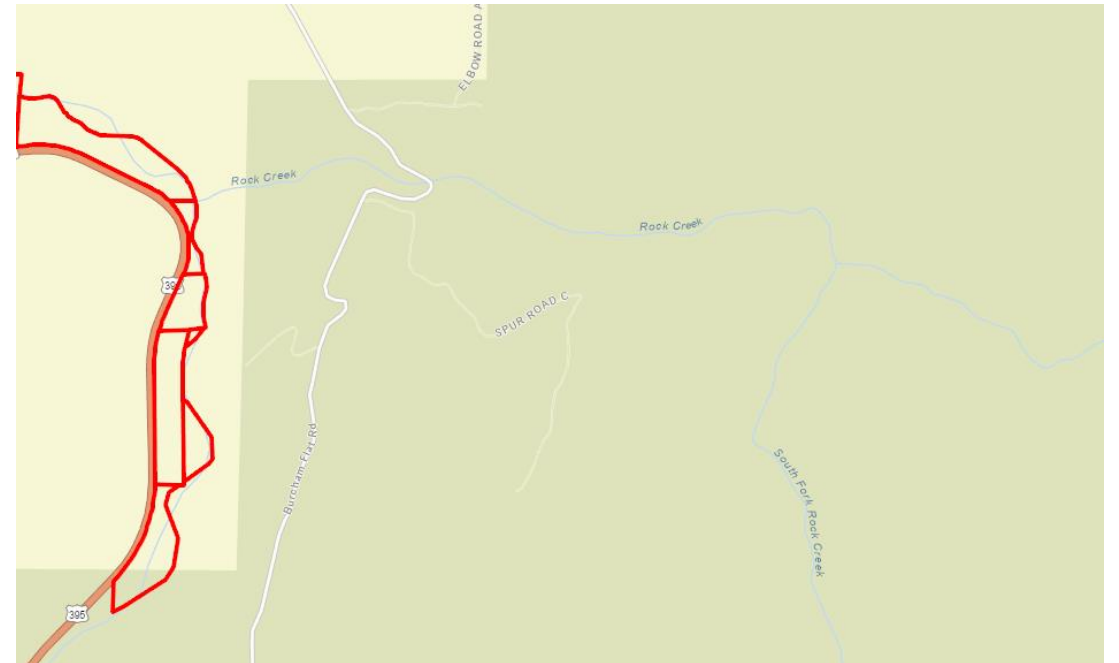
# Mono City: Possible Next Steps

## 1. Preliminary policy direction

- Political, legal and administrative sensitivities inherent with any of the preceding observations – other than staff, possibly, becoming reacquainted with the details of the Conservation Easement and related agreements, and any encumbrances that may exist on the Agriculture or Resource Management parcels – make it **appropriate and advisable to seek preliminary policy direction from the Mono County Board of Supervisors and community input before suggesting specific steps** for, or expending further resources on any of these initiatives.

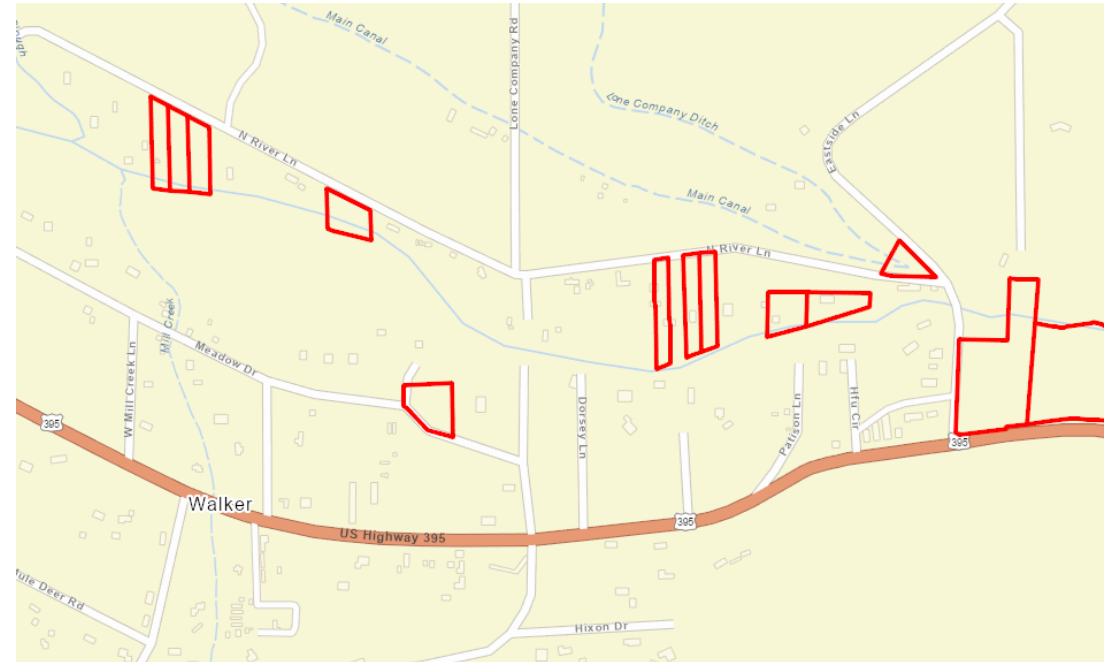
# Idea: Walker Canyon Recreation+

- Seven (7) parcels totaling 50.06 acres in northern Walker Canyon
  - With exception of one (1) 0.40-acre Rural Residential 10 parcel, all have Open Space designations.
  - Includes 4.92-acre parcel developed as primitive park
  - Other parcels part of Mountain Gate Park planning efforts
- No apparent deed restrictions
  - If not developed for park, might be traded for more developable land, or sold



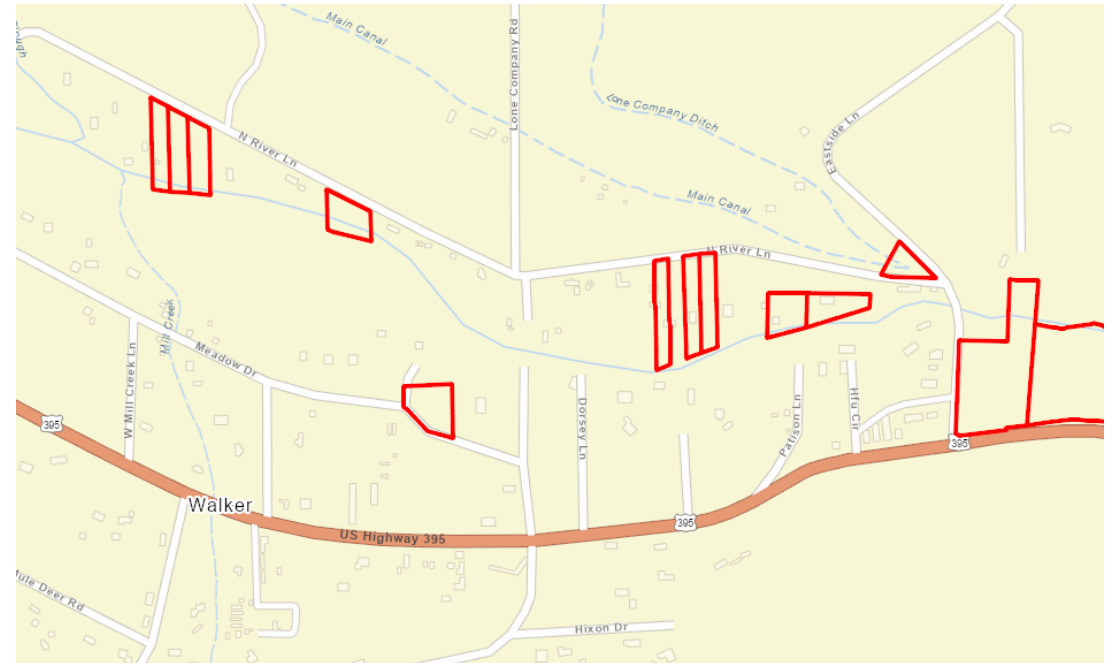
# Idea: Walker Area Recreational Infrastructure

- 12 parcels totaling 16.41-acres in southern Antelope Valley
  - Nine (9) riverfront lots
  - One (1) 5.35-acre parcel
- All but one (1) 0.66-acre Public Facilities parcel are designated Open Space
- Available deeds suggest all but (possibly) 5.35-acre parcel acquired from FEMA following 1997 floods and deed restricted
  - No deeds located for 0.66-acre PF or 1.31-acre Meadow Drive parcel



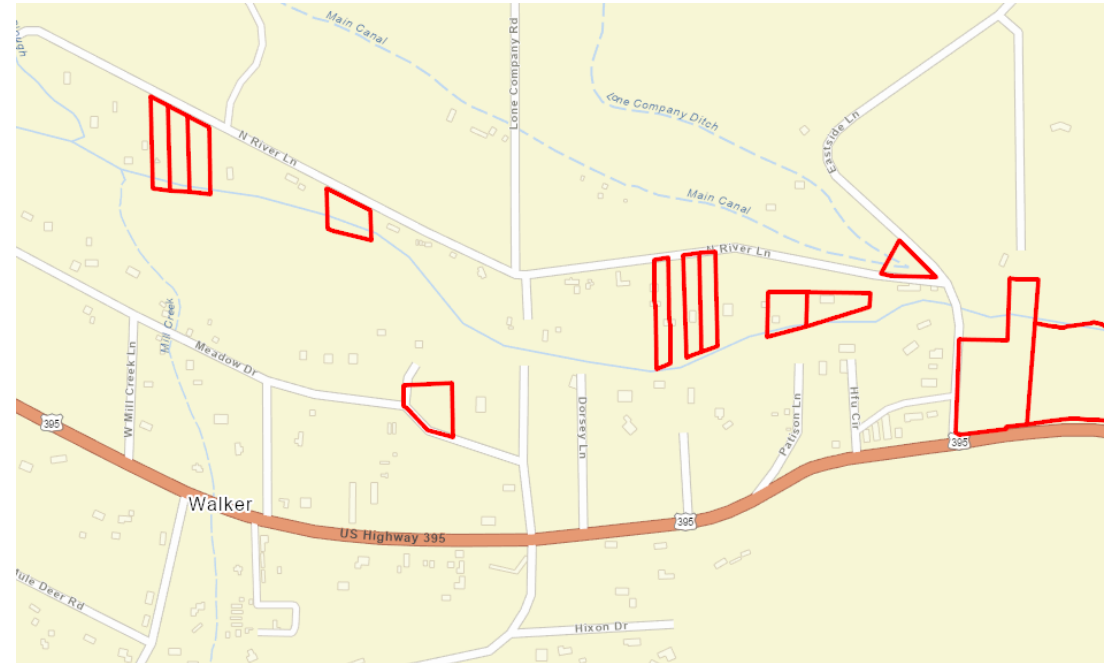
# Idea: Walker Area Recreational Infrastructure

- FEMA deed restrictions limit compatible uses to **“open space, recreational, or wetlands management practices.”**
  - Sample HMGP Grant Deed included as Exhibit E
  - **Water rights?**
- Satellite imagery suggests neighboring accessory structures or out buildings might be encroaching on some parcels
- Antelope Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee policy is said to recommend that none of these parcels be “developed” until 2041



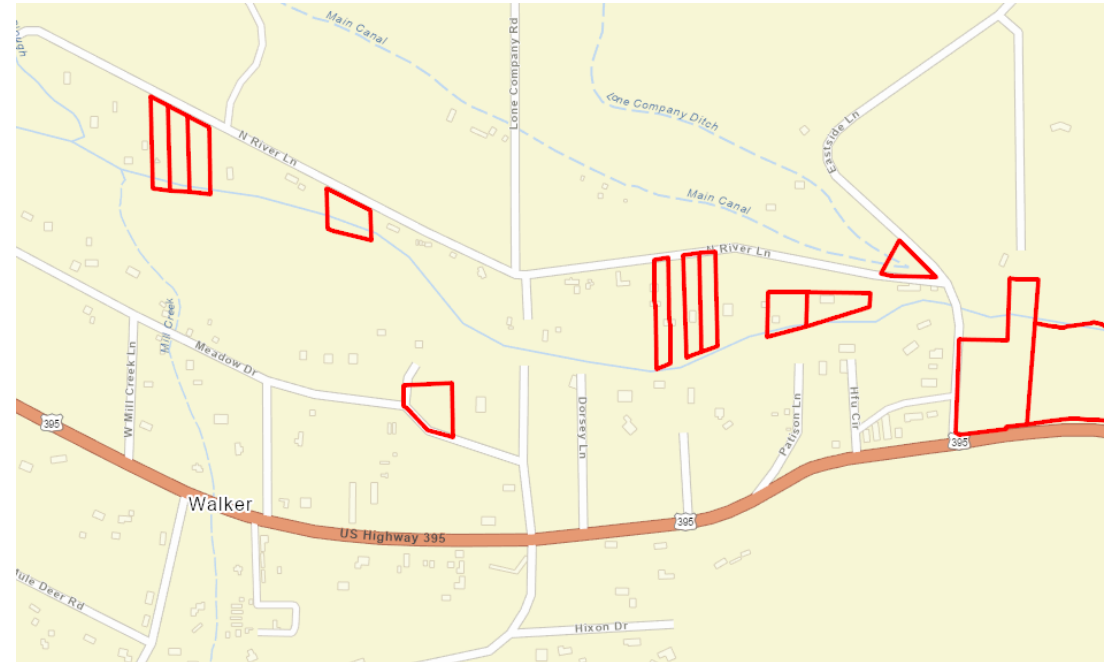
# Idea: Walker Area Recreational Infrastructure

- If not part of Mountain Gate Park Plan, 5.35-acre parcel has highway frontage and could be re-zoned as necessary for:
  - Housing; Commercial; RV Park?
- Three adjacent FEMA parcels might be developed into RV park with FEMA approval
  - County or concessionaire operated
  - economic multiplier effect
- FEMA parcels might be:
  - leased to neighboring property owners
  - used for parks or fishing access
  - traded or transferred to CDFW or NGOs for environmental purposes



# Walker Area: Possible Next Steps

1. Discuss and seek input from the Antelope Valley RPAC and community at large
2. Evaluate foreseeable public purposes for the properties, as well as methods of possible disposal
  - Especially for the 5.65-acre highway fronting parcel if not encumbered
3. Confirm the deed restrictions described here, **the County's water rights**, and determine the breadth of possible uses that FEMA might allow
4. Appraise the parcels





# Ideas: Coleville/Topaz

- 34.67-acre parcel and 13.83-acre parcel with Ag 10 land use designations.
  - Northern parcel a former private borrow pit, but not currently used as a Road Department material site
  - Water rights?
  - Near Alquist-Priolo Zone – County could facilitate useability with seismic work
- Lease or sale for agriculture uses
- Rezone and make available for housing or commercial uses through RFP and lease, or sale
- Land trade (BLM or military)



# Ideas: Coleville/Topaz

- 1.68-acre cemetery parcel (395/Cunningham with Public Facility designation).
  - Vacant, highway-fronting portion could be candidate for small affordable housing or commercial project if proximity to cemetery does not create parking or perception issues (such co-use not unheard of)
- 4.03-acre Open Space parcel at 395 & Topaz Lane.
  - Candidate for other uses (housing, ag, commercial)
  - Deed not reviewed; possible FEMA parcel
  - If FEMA restricted, still possible use as RV park
  - Possibly subject to AV RPAC recommended moratorium
- 0.65-acre parcel should be transferred to Fire District (if not already-owned by the District)



# Coleville / Topaz: Possible Next Steps

1. Determine water rights and deed restrictions, including FEMA
2. Discuss and seek input from the Antelope Valley RPAC and community at large
3. Given highway frontages, consider engaging real estate economist
4. Evaluate foreseeable public purposes, as well as possible disposal (RFP, trade, sale, etc.)
5. Appraise parcels



# Housing: Existing Public Facilities Infill

- County's landholdings include 32 parcels totaling almost 95 acres with existing or planned public facilities (Exhibit D)
- Some arguably underutilized and could be candidates for infill development
  - new public facilities
  - affordable, transitional or County workforce (e.g., paramedic) housing
    - Costly without economies of scale

Community	Address	Total Acres	Description /Notes
Benton	36 Christie Ln.	4.33	Benton Rental Housing; much of parcel vacant & used by Road Dept.
Bridgeport	1002 Aurora Canyon	38.11	Cemetery & Ballfields. 8 acres of vacant land
Bridgeport	221 Twin Lakes Rd.	3.38	New Jail site. Constraints? 0.5+ acres available
Crowley	332 S. Landing Rd. & 58 Pearson Rd.	1.55 & 2.81	Road Shop parcel with vacant frontage; Com. Cntr. with 0.7 ac.
Walker	Various	1.02 & 3.28 & 1.02 & 1.00	Road Shop with 0.75 acres unused abutting BH; near tennis courts; adj to paramedic res.

# Housing: Land Sale or Exchange Possibilities

- County-owned land not suited for housing development, and for which there is no foreseeable public purpose, might be sold to raise money, or traded to acquire suitable land for housing
  - discussed previously
  - enumerated in Exhibit C
  - need to determine deed restrictions, water rights, and appraised value

Community	Address / Location	Acres	Land Use	Zoning	Notes
Hammil Valley	Hwy 6 & White Mtn Ranch Rd & Chidago Canyon Rd.	1.09	PF	NA	Fire Station site? Water rights?
Hammil Valley	Hwy 6 north of Cinnamon Ranch Rd.	76.83	RR	NA	Possible habitat & flood considerations. Housing on west? Lease (for ag), sell or trade east?

# Housing: Creating Opportunities

- **Land Trades:** Provide state & federal land management agencies with inventory list, and see what they might be interested in trading for.
- **Initiate surplus government land process:** Requires advance notification to specific entities and property first being made available for low and moderate income housing. See if results in interest.
- **Tax-Defaulted Properties:** Once tax-defaulted properties noticed for sale at public auction, County (and other entities) have ability to object to sale and acquire properties in advance for back-taxes. In-holdings can be valuable for land trades. May acquire buildable land.
- **Creatively work with private property owners:** Their interest may be surprising.

# State Law: re Exchange, Disposal or Lease

1. Directly to a public entity after providing notification and offering property for sale or trade, for housing or parks, to a list of entities
  - AB 1486 (Ting; 2019) expands Surplus Land Act requirements
2. Directly to a public entity at entity's request for low and moderate income housing (without notice or competitive bid) at price representing fair market value.
3. Directly for sale to public at auction (requires notice described above)
4. Directly to the public via sealed bids and oral bids at meeting when sealed bids are opened (requires notice described above). Directly to the public through preparation of an RFP for its sale or development.
  - ❖ Sales price needs to be based on appraised fair market value, but property can be sold for less for Board of Supervisors determines doing so is in the County's best interest.

# Possible Next Steps

## 1. Develop County Real Property Management Policy

- Past, individual and situation-specific actions of previous Boards represent policy decisions in their own right; but not cohesive or universally applicable
- Title 3. Chapter 3.05 of County Code governs the lease of County real property

## 2. Pursue opportunities on an ad hoc basis

- Ideas presented here or other, new ideas
- Does not preclude simultaneously working on comprehensive real property management policy

## 3. Do nothing



# Considerations: Property Management Policy

Specifically focused on how County will approach managing its real property holdings. Key components might include:

1. **Acquisition.** Under what circumstances will the County acquire property?
2. **Management.** How long will the County “hold” property? And, what will it do with it in the interim?
3. **Disposal.** Under what circumstances will the County dispose of real property? What’s the process?
4. **Review.** How often should Board of Supervisors review County land holdings (e.g., every 4-years)?
5. **Due Diligence:** Obtain baseline title reports? Appraisals? Water rights?

# Considerations: Miscellany

- 1. Title Reports.** Establish title and any deed restrictions
- 2. Water Rights.** Determine water rights
  - Affects value, obviously
  - May influence possible uses or disposal considerations
  - May reveal other opportunities
- 3. Economic Analysis.** Consider employing real estate economist, in specific circumstances, to evaluate competing use proposals
- 4. Road Department Interest.** Determine if property used by Road Department is reported as being “owned” by the department.
  - May need to purchase from Road Department or, conversely, may be able to charge Road Department rent
- 5. Trial Balloons.** RFPs are free and easy.