

STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Report

January 4, 1979

VENTURA RIVER MOUTH

File No.: 79-2

SHORT DESCRIPTION: Preservation of 105 acres of agricultural land at the Ventura river mouth, establishment of urban rural boundary, and protection of river mouth.

LOCATION: Ventura River Mouth, City of Ventura, Ventura County, South Central Coast Region; bounded on the north and west by the hills of the Taylor Ranch, on the east by the Ventura River, and on the south by Main Street (Exhibit 1).

PROJECT CATEGORY: Agricultural Preservation

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE: Acquisition cost: \$735,000  
Net cost after resale: \$411,500  
Based on comparable area data.

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STAFF SUMMARY: The proposed project would preserve 105 acres of prime agricultural land and important riparian habitat (Exhibit 2), and would form an urban/rural boundary on the north side of the City of Ventura. In addition, the project would complement the Coastal Commission's efforts to protect and restore the wetland area at the Ventura River mouth, and would eliminate the need for costly new flood control measures. The Conservancy would acquire, lease, and eventually resell the protected site after assuring the buffering of the river channel and riparian vegetation. A willing seller exists and the City is expected to support a project.

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NOTE: This is a preliminary report on a possible Conservancy project and is not intended nor should it be construed as a recommendation by the State Coastal Conservancy or its staff that this project qualifies as a Conservancy project, or be undertaken or funded by the Conservancy.

## STAFF DISCUSSION:

### Area and Site Description-

The site is 105 acres of level cultivated farmland and riparian habitat and is the only land of its kind on the west side of the City of Ventura (Exhibit 2). From Highway 101 and from the City's main street, the land is quite visible and marks the scenic transition from the urbanized area to hills of grazing land (with some floraculture) to the north. To the south is the Ventura Freeway (Route 101) and Emma Wood State Beach. Between the proposed project site and the freeway is an 18-acre parcel of uncultivated land, little of which is developable because of flood hazard.

The proposed project site (Exhibit 3) is owned by Crown Zellerbach Corporation, which bought the property originally to develop a paper mill. Before that time, it was pasture land and was included in the Taylor Ranch holdings. The land was left fallow for a number of years, but was leased and is now in intensive row crop cultivation. The agricultural soils of the project site are prime but are limited somewhat by a high water table and relatively poor drainage; there is an overflow hazard. The limiting factors of profile and drainage reduce the productivity of the soil somewhat. However, the site could be artificially drained as are many other farmlands in the area making it equivalent to the most productive lands in the most productive lands in the fertile Oxnard Plain. Water quality and supply in the area are considered sufficient and are not currently affected by saltwater intrusion.

### Area History, Land Use Planning, and Zoning-

In 1971, the City zoned the project site Highway Commercial and proposed to construct highway access to the area with floodplain control measures to make it more developable. Due to local opposition, the community organized against this proposal. The area was later rezoned R-1A, which allows one house per acre.

The area is addressed in the Local Coastal Program as part of the Taylor Ranch/Ventura River sub-area. Most of this area is unincorporated but the project site was annexed by the City of Ventura. The Local Coastal Program Work Program reflects a strong city interest in development in this area. The Local Coastal Program states that "planned urban development of the Taylor Ranch has been discussed as a means of helping revitalize the Downtown and Avenue communities by providing economic support for diversified redevelopment and expansion in these areas. While urban services are not in place in the Taylor Ranch, area, it appears that they could be readily extended." The Work Program also states that conversion of these lands from agriculture may conflict with Section 30242 of the Coastal Act, unless it is found that such conversion would serve to preserve other prime agricultural land. A map of future land use by the City of Ventura classifies this area as a Flood Plain area which is "not to be considered for urbanization until a floodplain ordinance is adopted".

The South Central Coast Regional Commission, in amendments to the Issue Identification and Work Program of the Local Coastal Program, expressed its concern for agricultural preservation in the area. The conversion of Oxnard Plain agricultural lands to urban uses is approaching threshold levels of minimum acreage needed to sustain the regional agricultural economy as identified in a study of the Oxnard Plain prepared by the Coastal Commission. The potential loss of the project site to development should be considered in this context, notwithstanding its location just outside the Oxnard Plain proper.

Project action is needed, in light of the above considerations, to prevent retirement of the site from agricultural production, and to initiate wetland restoration activities for threatened portions of the site.

The owner of the 18-acre parcel between the proposed project site and Emma Wood State Beach has been discouraged in his proposals to develop a recreational vehicle park. He has decided instead to resort to agriculture, but has bulldozed all of the riparian vegetation in order to create a floracultural operation.

Agricultural operations at the project site are less damaging than development, but the Commission would like to ensure buffering of the river channel and riparian habitat so that sedimentation and pesticide runoff do not damage the habitat.

#### Project Description-

The proposed project would have three main objectives: to preserve prime agricultural land from development; to establish stable urban/rural boundaries; and to help protect the riparian habitat of the Ventura River Mouth. The project would also preserve an important viewshed north of the City of Ventura, assure compatible floodplain development, and obviate the need for expensive flood control measures and new urban services. In this regard, a Conservancy project on this site would compliment efforts of the Coastal Commission to restore the wetland area.

The project would involve Conservancy acquisition of the 105-acre site, leaseback, and eventual resale of the 75 usable acres of the property after suitably protecting it for agricultural or open space use by easement or deed restriction. The 30 acre riparian area would then be transferred to the State Department of Parks and Recreation for management as a Resource Protection Zone. In spite of the City's previous interest in developing the site, some measure of official local support as well as public support for the project is now anticipated.

Project Costs, Revenues,  
and Financing-

At an estimated \$7,000 per acre\*, the 105-acre proposed project site could be acquired in fee simple for \$735,000. Leasing the site for agriculture at \$300 per acre (an average of the lease values for intensely farmed prime vegetable producing lands in the area), presumably to the present lessee, could generate an annual return of \$22,500. After resale of the property, the net estimated cost to the Conservancy would be about \$411,500. The cost estimate is summarized below.

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\* This figure is based on comparable sales data assembled for planning purposes and does not constitute a commitment to purchase any land at this or any other price.

# Financial Summary of Ventura River Mouth Project

ACREAGE: 105

## Conservancy Expenditure

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>PER ACRE</u>
Estimated Acquisition Cost (fee simple)	\$735,000	\$ 7,000
Bargain Sale Savings (10%) (Estimated Savings Through Negotiations, Including Donations and Potential Tax Advantages)	73,500	700
Estimated Resale Value of 25 Acres for Agriculture (@ \$300 Per Acre Lease Value, assuming 8.5% loan for 35 Years)*	250,000	2380
Net Cost to the Conservancy	411,500	3920
Number of Years Needed to Recover Conservancy Costs Assuming Lease Revenue of \$36,750 Per Year and 7% Return on Lease Revenue Invested in State Treasurer's Pool		18 Years

\* As explained in the summary, this is an estimated minimum price and may vary depending upon the recognition of increased value of agricultural lands by potential purchasers.



AUTHORITY: CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT, VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

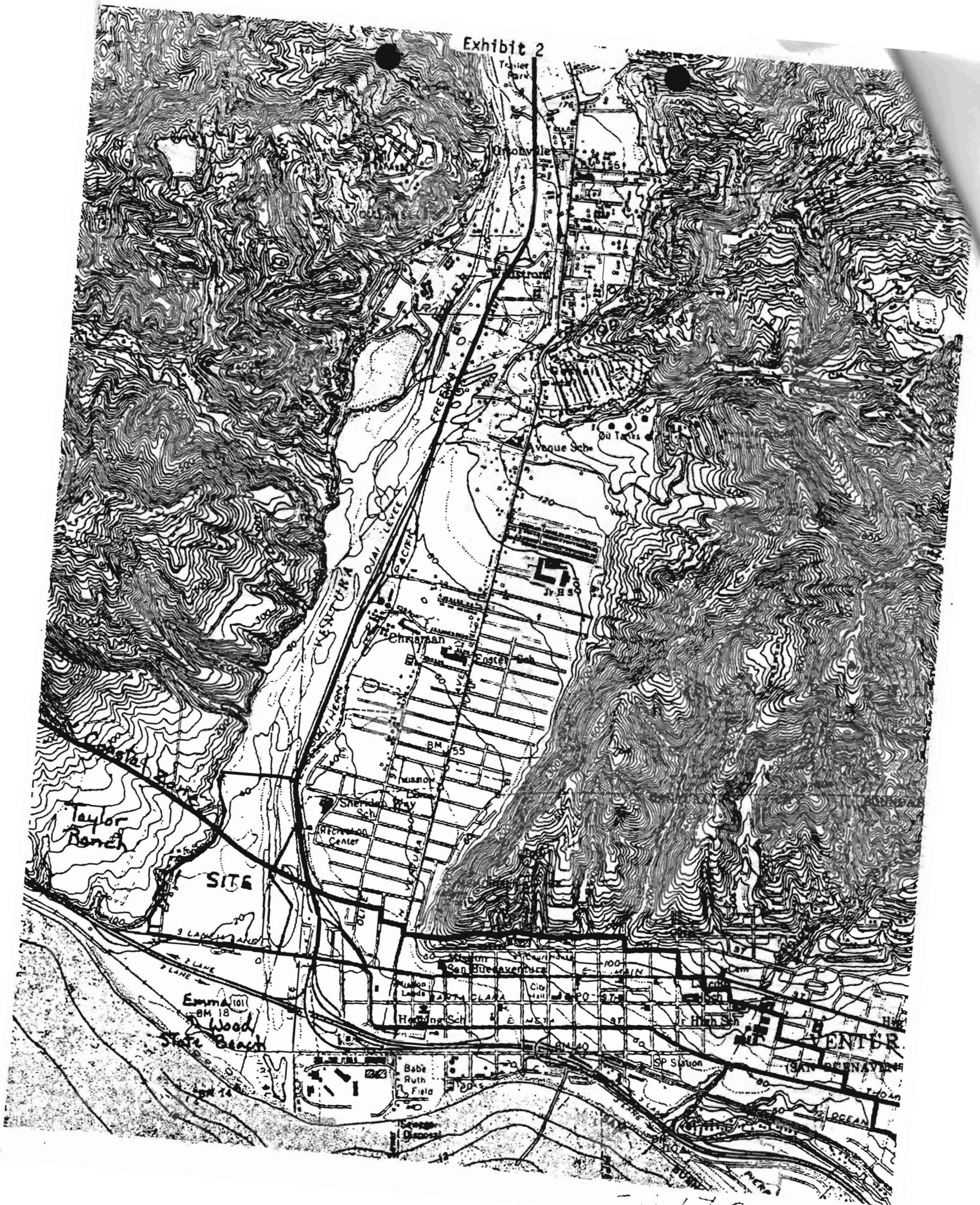
SCALE IN MILES

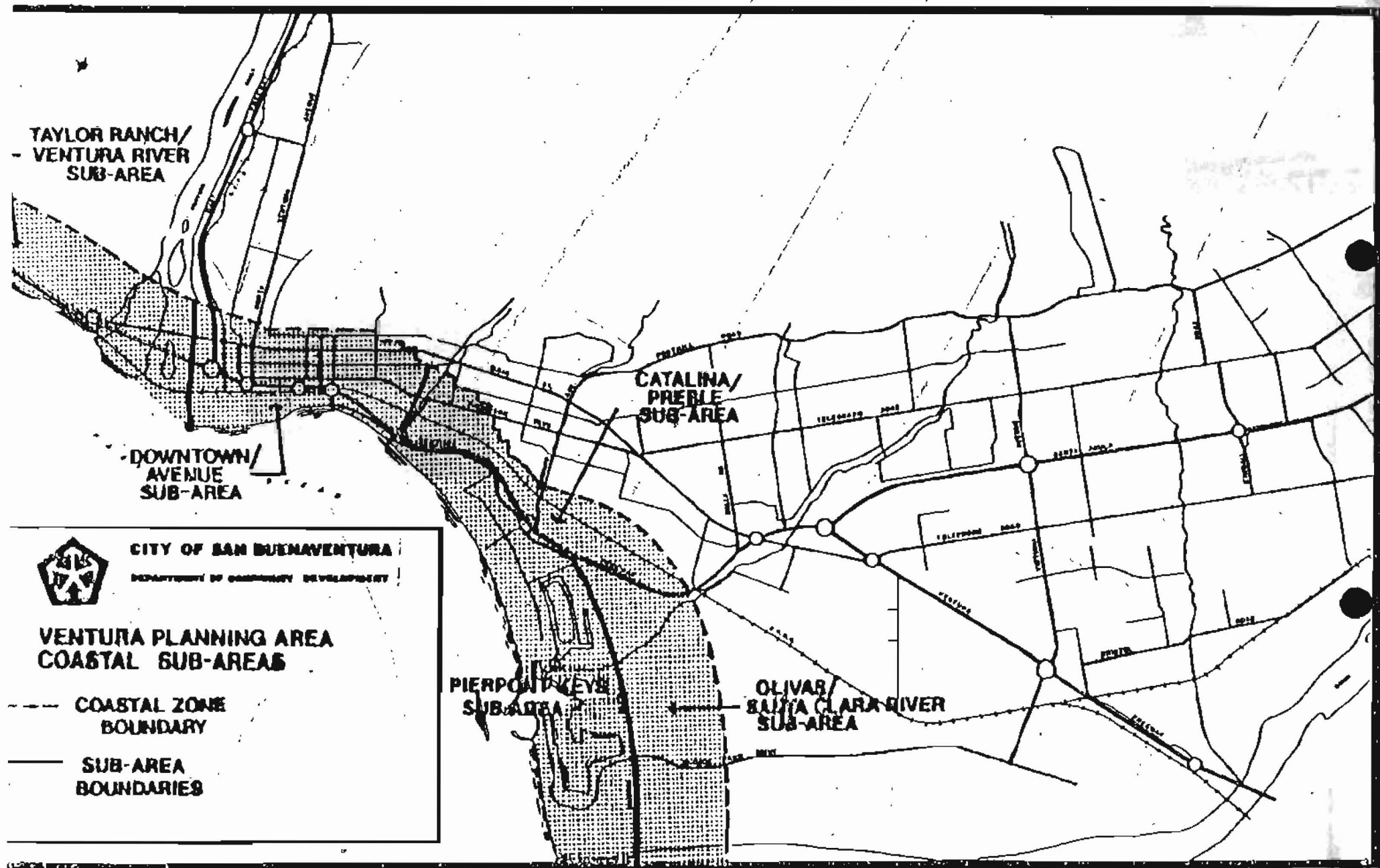
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Exhibit 1



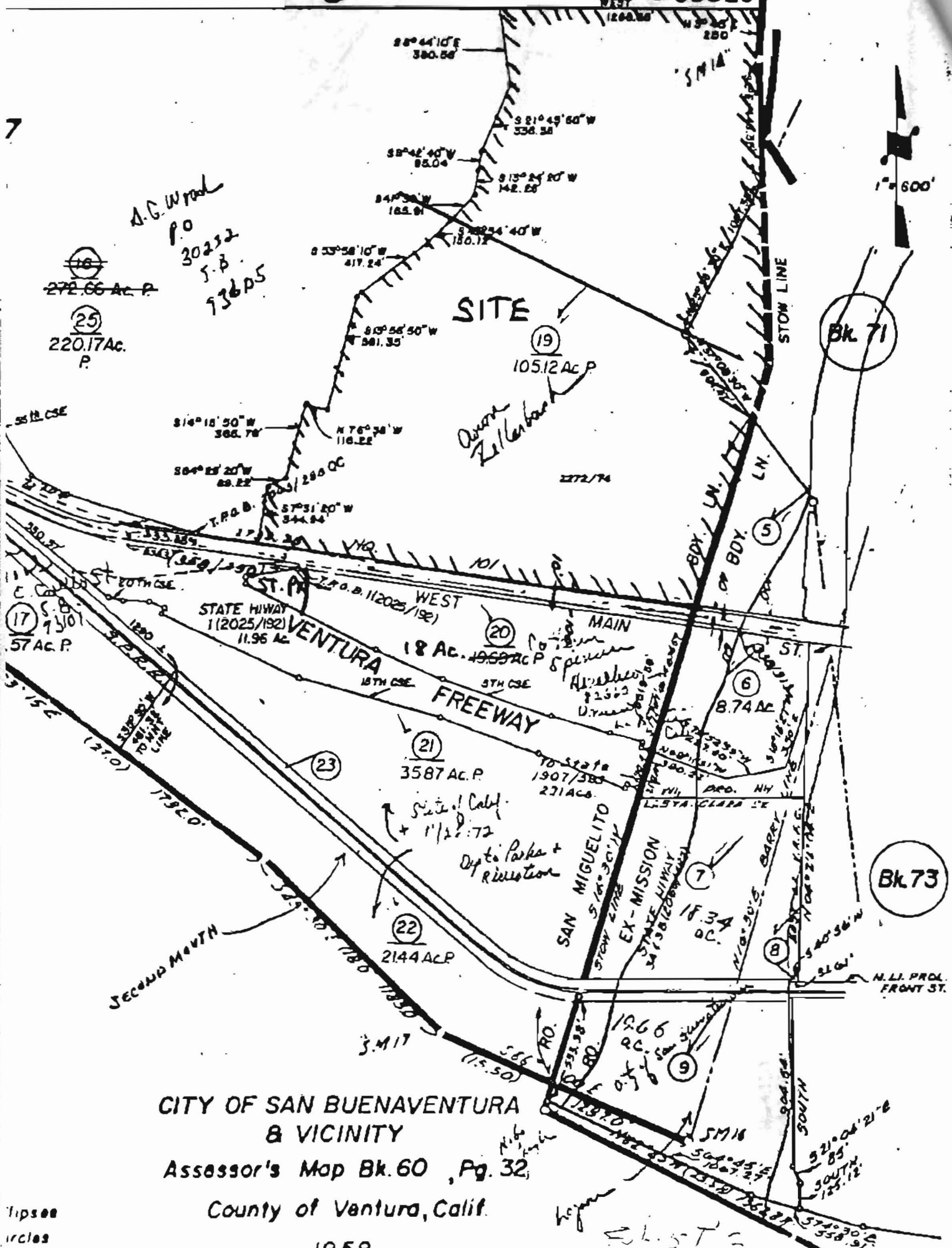






60-3

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CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA  
& VICINITY

Assessor's Map Bk. 60 , Pg. 32

County of Ventura, Calif.

tips on  
irides

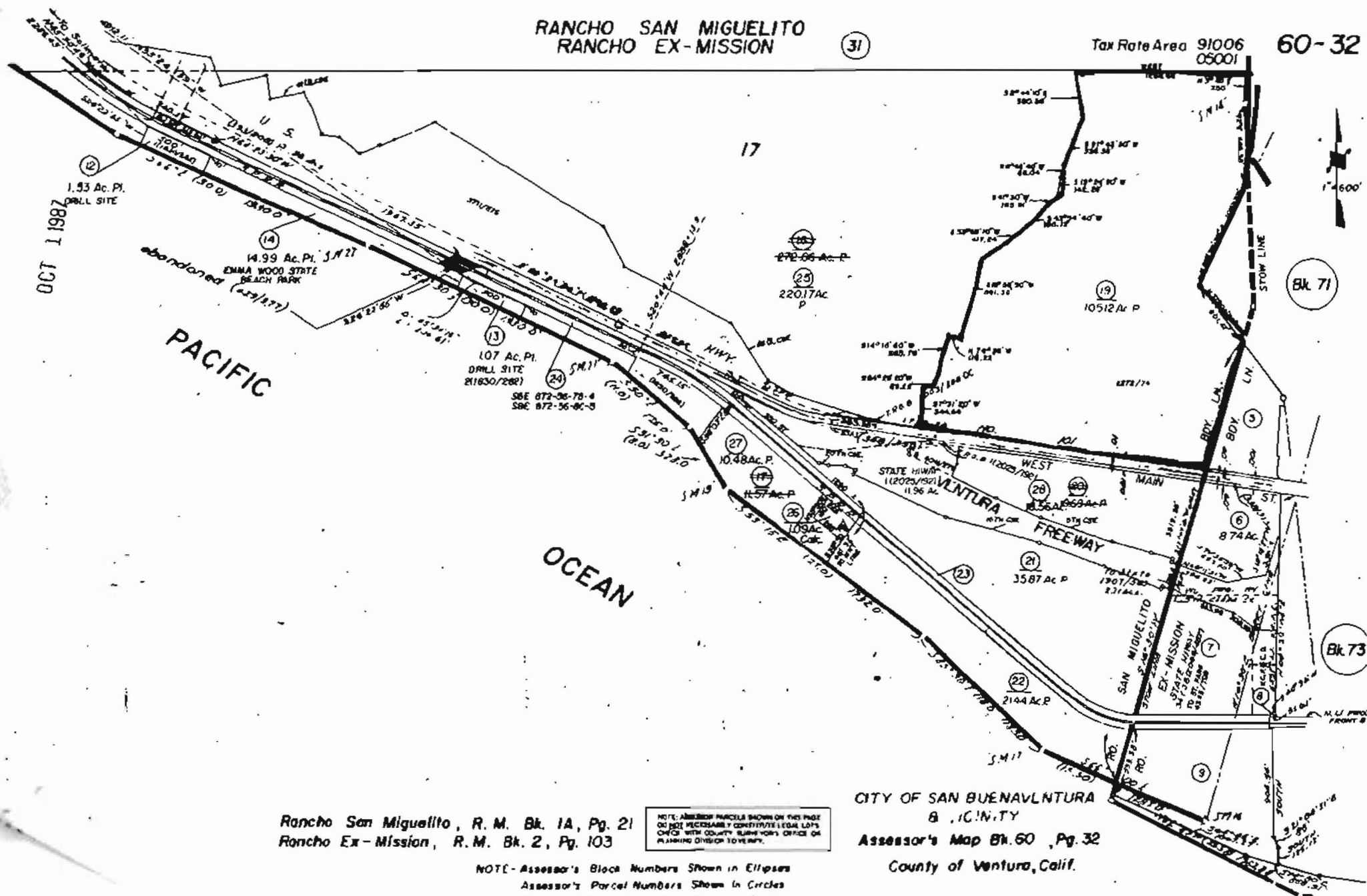
1050

RANCHO SAN MIGUELITO  
RANCHO EX-MISSION

(31)

Tax Rate Area 91006  
05001

60-32



Rancho San Miguelito, R. M. Bk. 1A, Pg. 21  
Rancho Ex-Mission, R. M. Bk. 2, Pg. 103

NOTE: ALL PARCELS SHOWN ON THIS PAGE  
DO NOT NECESSARILY CONSTITUTE A LEGAL LOT  
CHECK WITH COUNTY SURVEYOR'S OFFICE OR  
PLANNING DIVISION TO VERIFY.

NOTE: Assessor's Block Numbers Shown in Ellipses  
Assessor's Parcel Numbers Shown in Circles  
Assessor's Mineral Numbers Shown in Squares

CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA  
8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31  
Assessor's Map Bk. 60, Pg. 32  
County of Ventura, Calif.