Appendix E

Tree Removal Letter

Timberland Resource Consultants

165 South Fortuna Boulevard, Fortuna, CA 95540
707-725-1897 • fax 707-725-0972
trc@timberlandresource.com

August 9, 2021

SoHum Ranch, LLC
Attn: Paul Mitchell
9200 Sunset Blvd #600
Los Angeles, CA 90069

RE: Permit Application PLN-2020-16773 / APN 217-252-002

At your request, on August 6, 2021 I inspected the scattered conifers located within a natural grassland proposed to be graded and developed in association with the above cannabis cultivation project. This report addresses the need for any permitting associated with the removal of the trees.

Tree Removal Area

There are twenty-five conifer saplings (23 Douglas-fir and 2 Ponderosa pine) located within a natural grassland opening that is approximately 5 acres in size. The saplings range in size from 2" DBH to 11" DBH with a quadratic mean diameter of 7.5" DBH. In addition, there are approximately 20-30 manzanita shrubs in a narrow band paralleling the access road.

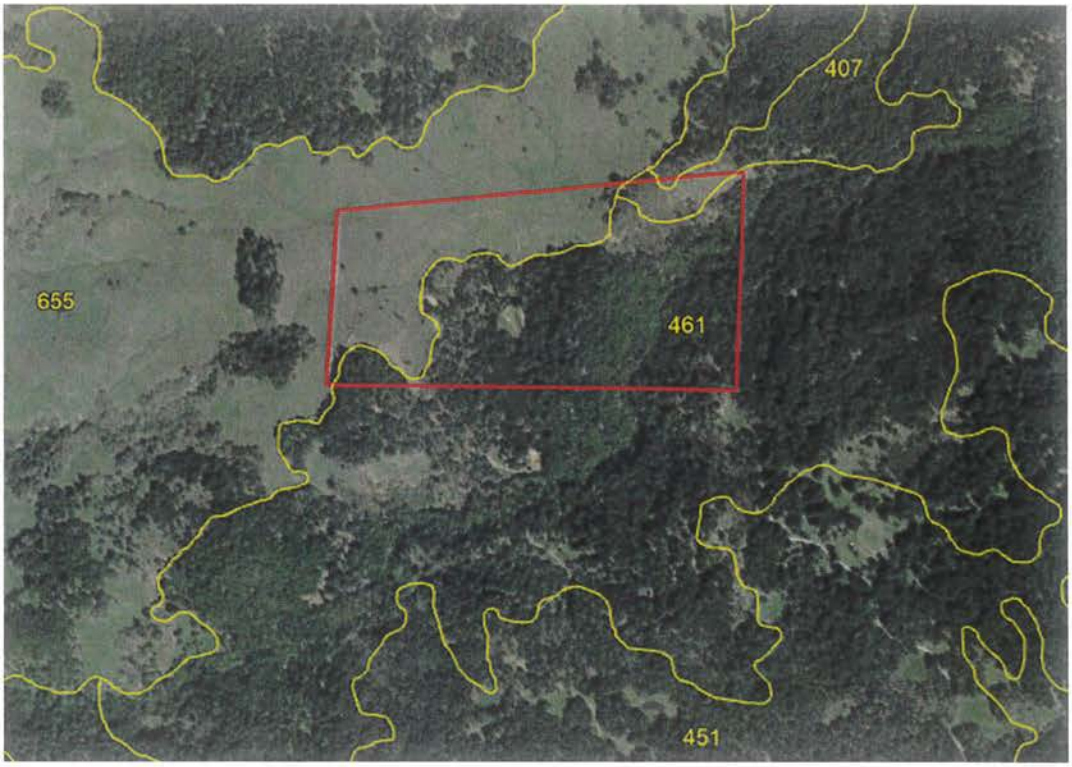
Review of historic aerial imagery (NAIP and Google) reveals that this these scattered trees are first visible beginning approximately in 2005 as shown on the attached 2005 NAIP DOQ. Subsequent imagery shows a slow but progressive increase in growth and expansion of the open-grown trees.

Native Grasslands

Fire scar tree ring data for this geographic area shows that historically native grasslands or prairies would have been maintained by the regular occurrence of fire, at least as often as every 10 years. By the early 1900's, human caused ignitions became less common and eventually all fires were aggressively suppressed. The change in fire regimes has allowed many species to establish and thrive in prairies where they were absent or rare before. The most obvious example of this is Douglas-fir trees. Douglas-fir seedlings are capable of germinating in prairies but are easily killed by the low intensity fires typical of grassland burns. After multiple years with no fire, the seedlings are able to grow sufficiently to survive typical grassland fires. Over time, the trees grow to form a closed canopy forest where insufficient light is present to support the prairie vegetation. The extent of prairies prior to European settlement is unknown but it's estimated that approximately 60% of the native prairies have been converted to closed canopy forests because of fire suppression (DPR 2007).

The project area contains such native grasslands that are succumbing to Douglas-fir encroachment at varying degrees. Oak woodland (California black oak and Oregon white oak) within the subject property is also suffering from Douglas-fir encroachment, but at a much more advanced state.

Soils



Per SoilWeb (https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu), the soils underlying the project site are Yorknorth-Witherell complex, 15 to 30 percent slopes (655). Both soil series are used for livestock grazing and wildlife habitat, and their associated vegetation is annual grasses and forbs. In contrast, the 561 & 451 soils located in the adjacent timberstands are used mainly for timber production, wildlife habitat, and for limited grazing. Natural vegetation is Douglas-fir, tanoak, Pacific madrone, big leaf maple, California laurel, black oak, and Oregon white oak.

Cal Fire Timber Harvesting Regulations

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) enforces the laws that regulate logging on privately-owned lands in California. Compliance with the Forest Practice Act and Board rules apply to all commercial harvesting operations, and to timberland conversion.

The tree removal in association with the proposed grading and subsequent development for cannabis cultivation would not require a permit from Cal Fire. This is based upon the fact that no conversion of timberland will occur as discussed below, and the cutting of the trees are not for commercial purposes. A permit from Cal Fire is only required when "timber operations" occur as defined below.

> ***4527. Timber operations; commercial purposes; criteria.***
> ***(a) (1)*** *"Timber operations" means the cutting or removal, or both, of timber or other solid wood forest products, including Christmas trees, from timberlands for commercial purposes, together with all the incidental work, including, but not limited to, construction and maintenance of roads, fuel breaks, firebreaks, stream crossings, landings, skid trails, and beds for the falling of trees, fire hazard abatement, and site preparation that involves disturbance of soil or burning of vegetation following timber harvesting activities, but excluding preparatory work such as tree marking, surveying, or road flagging.*
>
> ***(2)*** *"Commercial purposes" includes (A) the cutting or removal of trees that are processed into logs, lumber, or other wood products and offered for sale, barter, exchange, or trade, or (B) the cutting or removal of trees or other forest products during the conversion of timberlands to land uses other*

than the growing of timber that are subject to the provisions of Section 4621, including, but not limited to, residential or commercial developments, production of other agricultural crops, recreational developments, ski developments, water development projects, and transportation projects.

Timberland Conversion

The removal of the scattered conifer saplings does not constitute timberland conversion because the trees are growing in a natural grassland, which is not timberland as defined as follows:

> ***Timberland**, pursuant to PRC § 4526, means land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the board as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species, on a district basis, is defined in 14 CCR § 895.1.*

Section 912.7(a) of the Forest Practice Rules states *"Rock outcroppings, meadows, wet areas, or other areas not normally bearing commercial species shall not be considered as requiring stocking and are exempt from such provisions."*

Humboldt County Regulations

The subject property is zoned Agriculture. Timber harvesting is a principally permitted activity within such zoned lands. Humboldt County's Streamside Management Areas and Wetlands Ordinance prohibits tree removal from within the SMA except for "Routine maintenance activities" per Section 61.1.4.1. Please note that none of the trees proposed for harvest as described in this report are located in the SMA, and there shall be no tree removal within the SMA as shown on the attached Tree Removal Map.

Sincerely,

Chris Carroll, RPF #2628
Timberland Resource Consultants

Photographs

Photograph 1: Conifer and manzanita encroachment into a natural grassland located within the project area. Photo date 8-6-2021.

Photographs

Photograph 2: Conifer and manzanita encroachment into a natural grassland located within the project area. Photo date 8-6-2021.

Photographs

Photograph 3: Conifer and manzanita encroachment into a natural grassland located within the project area. Photo date 8-6-2021.

Photographs

Photograph 4: Conifer encroachment into a natural grassland located within the project area. Photo date 8-6-2021.

Photographs

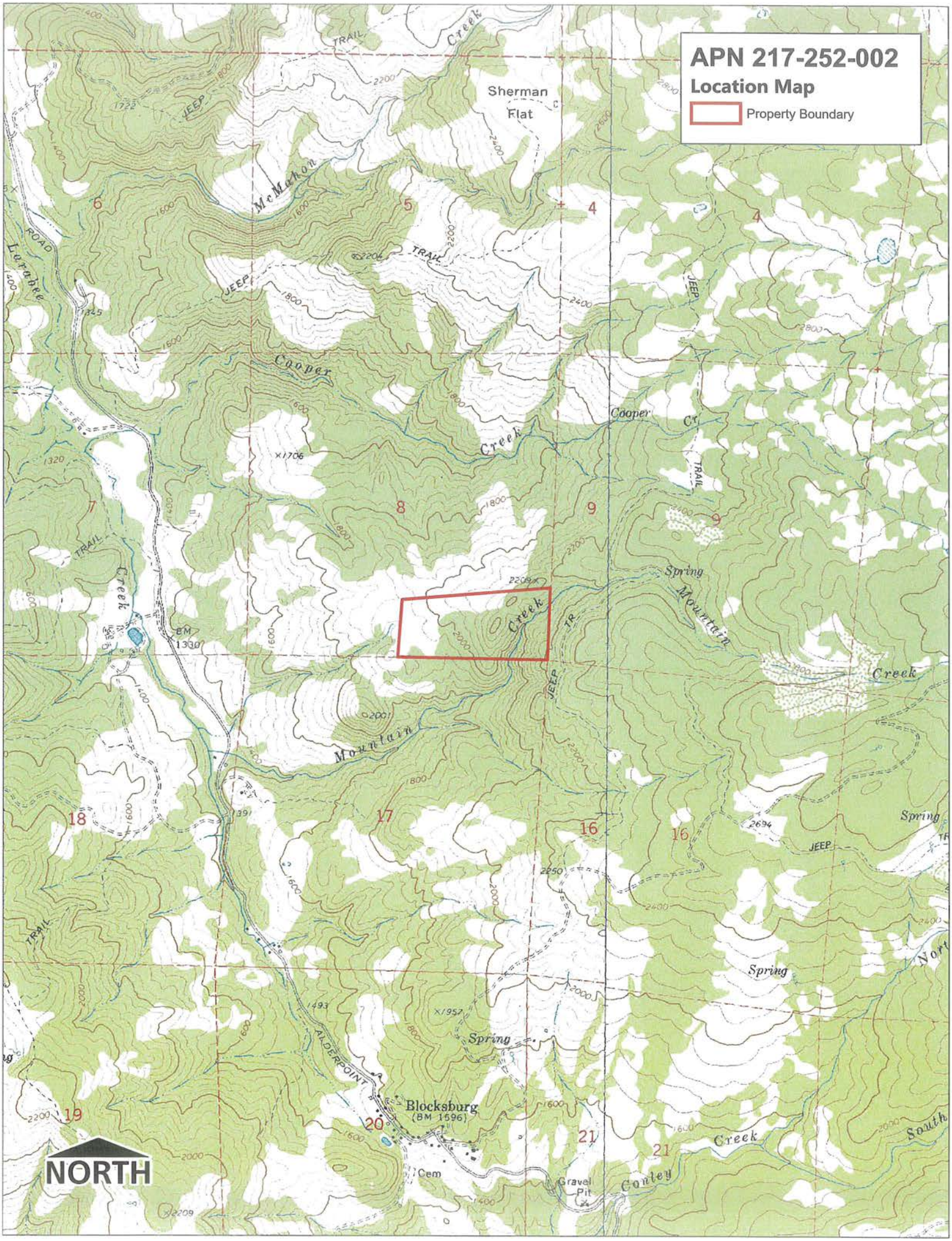
Photograph 5: Manzanita and a small 2" DBH Douglas-fir photo left. Photo date 8-6-2021.

Photographs

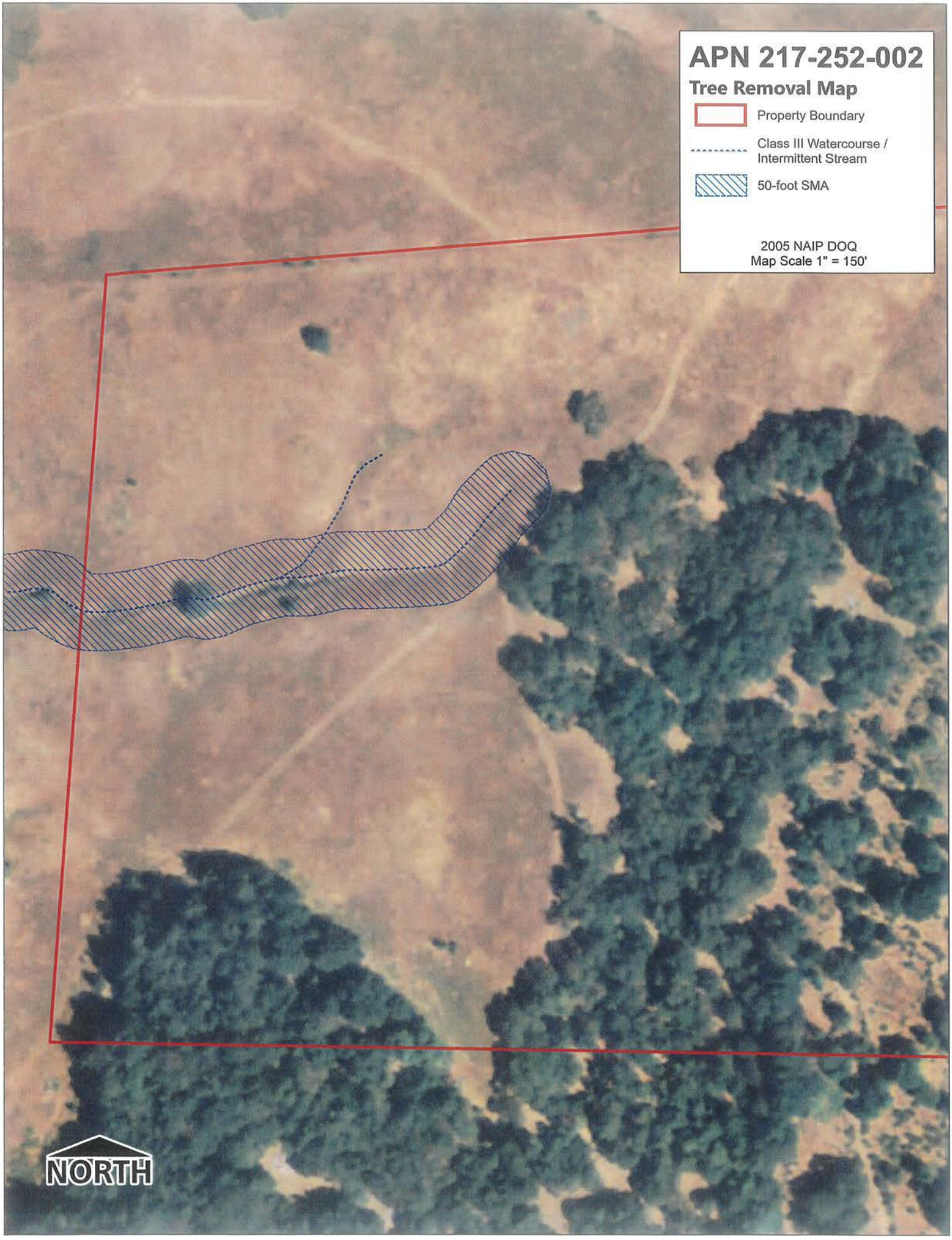
Photograph 6: Upper photo is the project area, which hasn't been grazed for nearly 10 years. The lower photo is the adjacent property to the north (fence is property boundary), which is intensively grazed with no manzanita or conifer encroachment. Interesting illustration of how different land management activities can influence conifer encroachment. Photo date 8-6-2021.

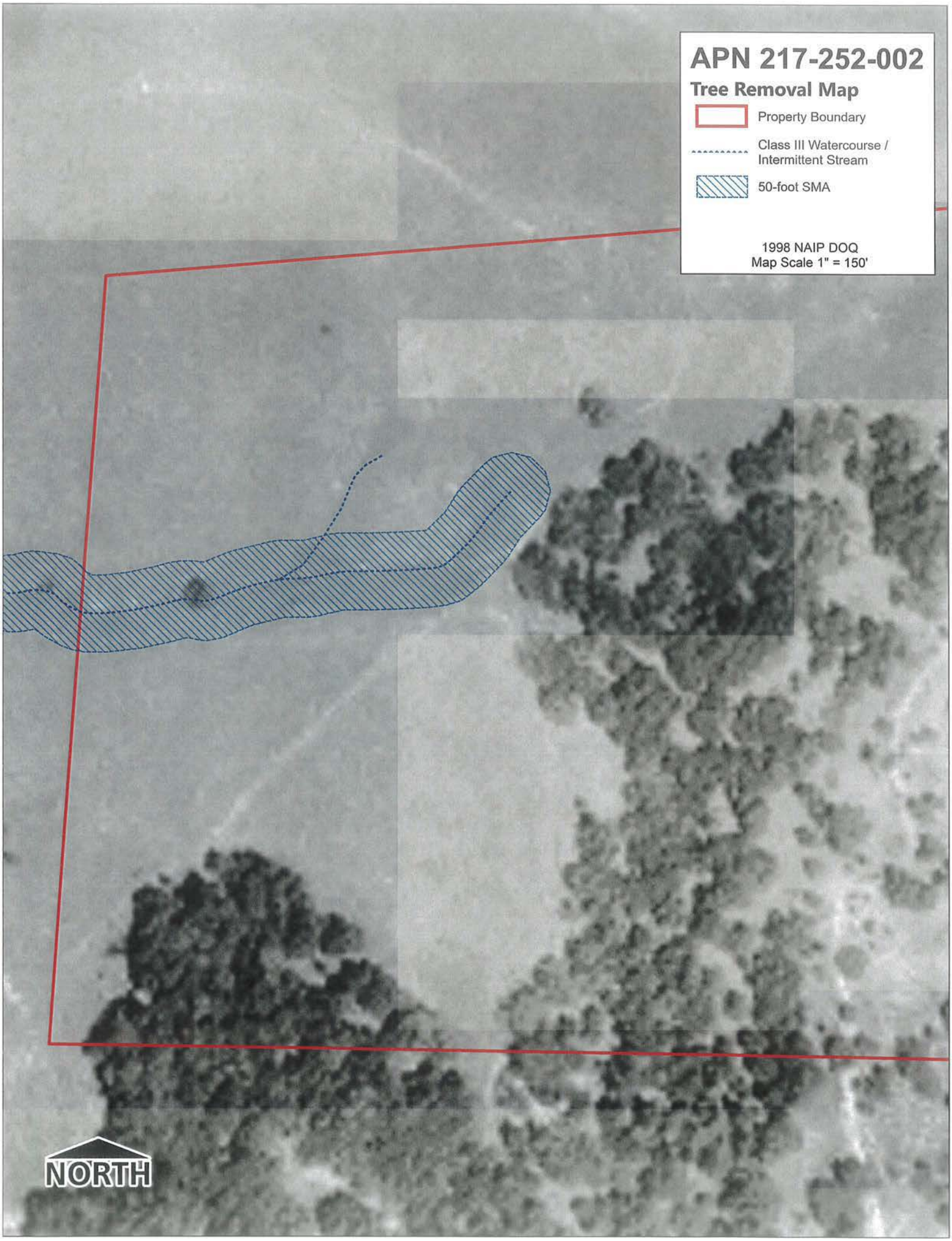
Photographs

Photograph 7: Oak woodland (California black oak and Oregon white oak) located directly east of the project area suffering from conifer encroachment. Photo date 8-6-2021.


APN 217-252-002
Location Map
Property Boundary
Sherman Flat
McMahon
Cooper Creek
Cooper Cr
Spring Mountain Creek
Mountain Creek
Spring
Blocksburg
(BM 1596)
Cem
Gravel Pit
Conley Creek
ALDERPOINT
JEEP TRAIL
NORTH

APN 217-252-002
Tree Removal Map
Property Boundary
Tree to be Removed
Class III Watercourse / Intermittent Stream
50-foot SMA
2020 NAIP DOQ
Map Scale 1" = 150'
DF 7"
DF 2"
DF 11"
DF 11"
13 DF ~4-10"
DF 8"
DF 8"
PP 6"
PP 7"
5 DF ~4-11"
NORTH


APN 217-252-002
Tree Removal Map
Property Boundary
Class III Watercourse / Intermittent Stream
50-foot SMA
2005 NAIP DOQ
Map Scale 1" = 150'
NORTH


APN 217-252-002
Tree Removal Map
Property Boundary
Class III Watercourse / Intermittent Stream
50-foot SMA
1998 NAIP DOQ
Map Scale 1" = 150'
NORTH