062-26 NDE

County of Santa Cruz

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: Clerk of the Board
Attn: Stephanie Cabrera
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

THIS NOTICE HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OFFICE FOR A PERIOD COMMENCING 7/13/2026
AND ENDING 8/18/2026

Project Name: Pinto Lake County Park Skatepark

Project Location: 757 Green Valley Rd, Watsonville, CA.

Assessor Parcel No.: 050-142-12

Project Applicant: Santa Cruz County Parks

Project Description:

The project consists of the construction of a new skatepark and associated site improvements at Pinto Lake County Park, including modification of an existing biofiltration planter along Green Valley Road to comply with County Design Criteria (CDC) stormwater requirements. The skatepark will provide a public recreational facility serving County residents and park visitors. Associated improvements include removal of an existing asphalt path, installation of a cobble-lined swale and area drains to convey runoff to the modified biofiltration planter, and implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize hydrologic and pollutant impacts. The total new and replaced impervious area associated with the project is 9,733 square feet, classifying the project as a Large Project under the County Design Criteria and triggering full LID and BMP compliance requirements. The biofiltration planter will be redesigned to provide stormwater treatment and detention consistent with CDC requirements, including detention of runoff from the 10-year, 15-minute storm event at the 5-year pre-development release rate, as required for projects within the Salsipuedes Creek Watershed.

To accommodate the proposed skatepark, three (3) mature London Plane trees will be removed as part of site preparation. All remaining on-site trees will be protected in place pursuant to the recommendations of a certified arborist retained for the project. In response to the tree removals, six (6) new trees will be planted on-site, representing a net gain in tree canopy. In addition, all biofiltration planters and associated landscape areas will be planted with 100% native understory species, enhancing habitat value, supporting local pollinators, and reducing long-term landscape maintenance needs.

The skatepark footprint will be constructed on areas currently occupied by unused turf grass that required irrigation to maintain. The replacement of non-functional turf with the skatepark hardscape and native plantings will result in overall water savings, consistent with the County's water conservation goals and the State's urban water use reduction objectives. The remainder of the site will be retained in its natural state, further minimizing the project's environmental footprint.

Exempt Status: Categorical Exemption

Class: Class 3 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures *(California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15303)*

RECEIVED
CLERK OF THE BOARD
JUL 13 2026
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

Revised 5/29/2026

Reasons Why Project is Exempt:

This project qualifies for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, which exempts the construction of limited new facilities in areas where the project will not create significant environmental effects. The proposed skatepark constitutes a small new recreational structure and associated accessory improvements on an existing developed park site. The zoning of the site is compatible with the proposed project, and a skate park was included in the approved master plan for the park in 2001. The project is limited in scope and confined to a discrete, previously disturbed area within Pinto Lake County Park, and will not create significant environmental effects.

The project further satisfies the conditions for exemption under the following considerations:

1. **Infill/Existing Developed Site:** The project site is located within an existing county park on land that is currently developed with an asphalt path, grass field, and biofiltration planter. No native habitat, sensitive vegetation, or undisturbed land will be affected. Clearing and grading will be limited to the minimum area necessary to construct the project. The skatepark will be built entirely over areas currently occupied by unused but irrigated turf grass, thereby converting non-functional water-intensive landscaping into an active public recreational amenity.
2. **Tree Removal, Protection, and Net Canopy Gain**: While three (3) mature London Plane trees will be removed to accommodate the skatepark footprint, all remaining on-site trees will be protected in place in accordance with the recommendations of a certified arborist. To offset the removals, six (6) new trees will be planted on-site, resulting in a net gain of three trees and an overall increase in future canopy cover. The project therefore results in a net positive contribution to the urban forest and does not constitute a significant impact to tree resources.
3. **Native Landscaping and Habitat Enhancement:** All biofiltration planters and associated landscape areas will be planted with 100% native understory species. This represents a substantial improvement over the existing condition of non-native turf grass, providing increased habitat value for native pollinators and wildlife, reducing the need for pesticides and fertilizers, and improving long-term ecological function of the site. The incorporation of native plantings within the stormwater management infrastructure further enhances the project's environmental benefit.
4. **Significant Water Conservation:** The replacement of unused but irrigated turf grass with the skatepark hardscape and drought-tolerant native plantings will result in significant long-term water savings. This outcome is consistent with the County's water conservation objectives and supports statewide goals for reducing urban water consumption. The elimination of turf irrigation in this area represents a tangible environmental benefit attributable to the project.
5. **Stormwater and Environmental Protection Measures:** The project incorporates robust stormwater management measures consistent with County Design Criteria, including a modified biofiltration planter (SCM-1) designed to treat and detain runoff prior to discharge. The total new and replaced impervious area of 9,733 square feet triggers Large Project requirements under the CDC; accordingly, the project has been fully designed to comply with all applicable LID and BMP standards. Runoff will be managed to mimic existing drainage patterns, discharging to the gutter upstream of the roadside swale along Green Valley Road. LID measures include limiting soil compaction to areas beneath hardscape, minimizing the impervious footprint to the skatepark area only, and retaining the remainder of the site in its natural state. These measures ensure that hydrologic and water quality impacts are minimized and mitigated.
6. **No Unusual Circumstances**: There are no unusual circumstances that would result in a significant environmental effect. Geotechnical investigation conducted by Krazan & Associates, Inc. (October 2024) identified groundwater at 18 feet below grade, posing no significant constraint. Soil conditions have been accounted for in the stormwater management design. The site does not contain known sensitive species, cultural resources, or hazardous materials that would trigger further review. The tree removals are limited in number, offset by new plantings, and managed under certified arborist oversight, and therefore do not constitute an unusual circumstance under Section 15300.2.
7. **No Exception Applies:** None of the exceptions to categorical exemptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to this project. The site is not located in a particularly sensitive environment, does not involve the use of hazardous materials, is not adjacent to a designated scenic highway, and will not result in a cumulative impact. The project is consistent with the park's existing recreational use, results in a net environmental benefit through canopy gain, native habitat restoration, and water conservation, and will not result in significant effects due to unusual circumstances.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures are required. Stormwater BMPs and LID measures incorporated into the project design are standard engineering controls required by the County Design Criteria and do not constitute mitigation under CEQA.

Agency

Approving Project:

County Contact: **Britta Denise Hardesty** Telephone No. 831.454.5357

Date Completed:

This is to advise that the County of Santa Cruz *(Environmental Planning Division, CDI)* has approved the above-described project on 29 May 2026 and found the project to be exempt from CEQA under the following criteria:

Exempt status: (*check one*)

☐ The proposed activity is not a project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

☐ The proposed activity is not subject to CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060 (c).

☐ The proposed activity is exempt from CEQA as specified under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

☐ **Ministerial Project** involving only the use of fixed standards or objective measurements without personal judgment.

☐ **Statutory Exemption** other than a Ministerial Project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15260 to 15285).

Specify type:

☒ **Categorical Exemption**

Class 3

Reasons why the project is exempt:

Signature: _____ Date: 29 May 2026 Titled: Principal Planner, Environmental Coordinator