

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency): City of Hollister
375 Fifth Street, Hollister, CA 95023

County Clerk

County of: San Benito

(Address)

Project Title: Wisk Temporary Final Approach and Takeoff (FATO) Area

Project Applicant: Wisk Aero LLC

Project Location - Specific:

Hollister Municipal Airport property (60 Airport Dr, Hollister CA), south of the airport's Runway 31 End.

Project Location - City: Hollister

Project Location - County: San Benito

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project will be a relocation of Wisk's surrogate helicopter operations currently occurring on a small area near the end of Runway 13. The purpose of the project is to facilitate testing aimed at yielding vital data for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) Future Vertical Lift Infrastructure Advisory Circular (AC) and eVTOL and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Integration Pilot Program (eIPP). With the AC slated for a 2027 publication, the FAA has scheduled this testing to begin in 2026. The project will aim to integrate Wisk Aero's aircraft with necessary ground systems, demonstrate vertiport requirements, and provide data to inform broader AAM policies and infrastructure providers. This effort is anticipated to accelerate the development of revised vertiport requirements and standards, benefiting the FAA and the wider AAM community.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Hollister

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of Hollister

Exempt Status: (check one):

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 1 (14 CCR § 15301) and Class 3 (14 CCR § 15303)
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project qualifies for a Class 1 categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), which covers the operation, repair, or minor alteration of existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The project would relocate vertiport operations that already occur at CVH, and the proposed low-frequency helicopter and eVTOL testing would not expand existing aircraft use at the Airport. The project also qualifies for a Class 3 categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures), which covers construction of limited numbers of small new facilities or equipment, including utility extensions of reasonable length to serve such construction (Section 15303(d)). Please refer to the attached consistency analysis for more information.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Jeff Crechriou, Airport Director

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 831-636-4365 x2000

email: Jeff.Crechriou@hollister.ca.gov

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Jeff D. Crechriou Date: 7/22/26 Title: Airport Director

Signed by Lead Agency

Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Filed in San Benito County

FRANCISCO DIAZ: County Clerk

35-20260722-036

07/22/2026
Pages: 8
Fee: \$ 50.00

By asalazar, Deputy

SAN BENITO COUNTY CLERK - RECORDER

RECEIVED: 7/22/2026

REMOVE: 8/22/2026 SCAN: 7/22/26





CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

July 21, 2026

Project: Wisk Temporary Final Approach and Takeoff (FATO) Area

Subject: Categorical Exemption Consistency Analysis

The Hollister Municipal Airport (CVH) has performed an environmental analysis of the proposed Temporary FATO Area (project) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This attachment serves as the technical documentation of the CEQA compliance review and evaluates whether the project qualifies for a CEQA exemption pursuant to a Categorical Exemption (CE).

STATUTORY AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS

CEQA Guidelines Article 19 includes a list of classes and examples of projects, which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment, and therefore are exempt for further analysis under CEQA. The project will be assessed for consistency with the Class 1 CE (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, Existing Facilities) and Class 3 CE (CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) cited in the Notice of Exemption (NOE). Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061, the analysis will also consider whether the project is barred from the application of the Class 1 and Class 3 CE by any of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to facilitate testing aimed at yielding vital data for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) Future Vertical Lift Infrastructure Advisory Circular (AC) and eVTOL and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Integration Pilot Program (eIPP). With the AC slated for a 2027 publication, the FAA has scheduled this testing to begin in 2026. Furthermore, this facility will serve the FAA's eIPP to showcase autonomous systems, utilizing the initial vertiport situated on a public U.S. airport in Hollister.

The proposed project will be a relocation of Wisk's surrogate helicopter operations currently occurring on a small area near the end of Runway 13. This new FATO will allow for collection of relevant aircraft flight test data to inform FAA standards and vertiport guidance. While Wisk anticipates greater use of this temporary FATO in the future, the initial scope of the intended flight test operations will be focused on vertiport standards. Its primary purpose is to integrate our aircraft with necessary ground systems, demonstrate vertiport requirements, and provide data to inform broader AAM policies and infrastructure providers. This temporary vertiport will be used for concurrent testing and FAA collaboration, specifically to inform future revisions of FAA Vertiport Guidance. This effort is anticipated to accelerate the development of revised vertiport requirements and standards, benefiting the FAA and the wider AAM community.



CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

The project disturbance area is approximately 46,200 square feet (1.1 acres) of land located on the south side of the Runway 31 End. The project location and proposed components are shown in **Figure 1**. The project consists of the components identified below, all of which would require disturbance up to a maximum depth of 1.5 feet:

- Construction of a temporary surface area for towing (21,400 square feet)
- Construction of a temporary FATO pad (10,000 square feet)
- Construction of a stabilized construction entrance (1,000 square feet)
- Construction of an infiltration trench (2,630 square feet)
- Construction of storm drainage pipes (470 linear feet)
- Construction of eight solar panels (140 square-foot panel surface area)
- Construction of a cable trench (492 linear feet)
- Construction of one windsock

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

Construction is anticipated to begin on August 1, 2026, with an estimated duration of 3 months ending in October. The construction schedule assumes 3 weeks for ground preparation and at least 4 weeks for installation of the project. During installation of the temporary towing surface, the Taxiway K to Runway 31 will be closed for a short period of time (2-3 days).

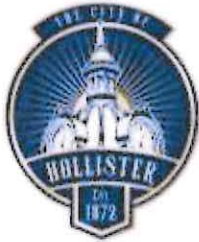
OPERATIONAL PHASE

The operational phase will involve low-frequency helicopter and eVTOL tests, which would amount to less than 1 annual daily average aircraft operation. Furthermore, flight test operations for the Bell 206 helicopter typically involve less than 10 seconds of hovering time. These estimates are based on flight test data collected between the years 2022 and 2025.

The proposed flight test operations will follow a phased, progressive approach:

- The initial phase of flight testing (October through early 2027) will involve the use of a Bell 206 helicopter, equipped with sensor packages and with a pilot onboard, to demonstrate basic landing and takeoff procedures.
- Subsequent phases (late 2026 through early 2028) will involve Gen 6 aircraft demonstrating basic hover, landing, and takeoff procedures as an autonomous aircraft, and progressing to more advanced maneuvers during later stage testing.

Once the project is operational, the flight test operations that are currently carried out from a small helipad near the Runway 13 end will be discontinued. Accordingly, the project will replace existing operations rather than increase aircraft operations.



CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

Class 1 CE Evaluation

Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines defines Class 1 projects as projects that consist of “the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.”

The key consideration for a Class 1 CE is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use. As described above, the project would effectively relocate the existing vertiport uses that currently take place at CVH, and the proposed low-frequency helicopter and eVTOL tests would not meaningfully expand existing aircraft uses at the Airport.

Class 3 CE Evaluation

Class 3 projects consist of “construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure.” The project mostly closely resembles the following example from CEQA Guidelines Section 15303:

- d) Water main, sewage, electrical, gas, and other utility extensions, including street improvements, of reasonable length to serve such construction.

The CEQA Guidelines state that the examples in 15303 are not intended to be all-inclusive of project types that may fall within the Class 3 categorical exemption. The key consideration for a Class 3 CE is whether the project involves installation of new equipment or construction of small structures. Therefore, as the project involves the installation of a temporary modular steel vertiport structure, eight solar panels, one windsock, and lighting, the project would install small new equipment and facilities, consistent with the Class 3 CE.

EXCEPTIONS TO CE APPLICABILITY

As previously noted, the applicability of CEs is qualified by the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2(a) through (f) of the CEQA Guidelines. In the discussion below, each exception is followed by an explanation of why the exception does not bar the application of the Class 1 and Class 3 CE.



CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

Location (Section 15300.2(a)): *Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particular sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

The project site is not located within an officially designated State scenic highway and there are no historical resources that are listed or eligible for listing at the project site. Additionally, there is negligible potential for buried cultural resources, as the project has been subjected to ground disturbance due to prior development and operations related to the airport. All hazardous waste sites identified on State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) databases are either permitted uses or have “Completed – Case Closed” statuses, and therefore no existing contamination concerns were identified.

The project site was evaluated for sensitive biological resources in a Biological Evaluation (BE), which included field surveys on April 15, 2026. The BE notes that regular mowing and discing of the project area substantially reduces habitat quality and refugia stability. Furthermore, the potential for occurrences of the San Joaquin kit fox is considered “extremely low.” The last occurrence of this species in a 10-mile radius dates to 1992, the project area does not include suitable habitat for kit fox denning, movement, or foraging, and the airfield perimeter fence reduces the potential of entry into the project area. As a result, the BE concludes that the project area provides only marginal upland habitat and supports a low potential for CTS and/or California red-legged frog to occur during construction. Identified CTS dispersal barriers and a lack of suitable habitat for the California red-legged frog further reduce the potential for these species to occur in the project area.

The BE was prepared to complete the FAA’s environmental review requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). On June 4, 2026, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) initiated informal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the City of Hollister’s proposed project. On June 30, 2026, the Service, in accordance with Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations Part (CFR) 402.12(j), concurred with FAA’s determination (via email) that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect any listed species or critical habitat.

Therefore, based on the review of location considerations, Section 15300.2(a), would not preclude the use of the Class 3 CE. The Class 1 CE is not subject to Section 15300.2(a).

Cumulative Impact (Section 15300.2(b)): *All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

The project would include the installation of a temporary taxiway and FATO area, which would effectively relocate existing helicopter and eVTOL operations that currently take place within the existing airport boundary. All proposed project activities, including staging and vehicle access routes, would occur on previously disturbed land within the Airport property. No construction or operational activities are



CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

proposed that would result in significant environmental impacts. Thus, the project would not contribute to impacts that would be cumulatively significant. Therefore, Section 15300.2(b) is not applicable to the project.

Significant Effect (Section 15300.2(c)): *A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

The project site is highly disturbed and is not located adjacent to sensitive uses. In the case of biological resources, and as discussed under the 15300.2(a) analysis, the FAA informally consulted with the USFWS during the NEPA process and determined the project would not have the potential to significantly impact sensitive species known to occur in the area. The project involves installing a temporary taxiway, connecting the vertiport to Taxiway K and Runway 31, which would relocate flight testing operations within the existing airport boundary and installation of 473 linear feet of storm drain, eight solar panels, 492 linear feet of conduit, one windsock, and lighting. The project therefore would not include activities or risk impacts that are atypical or unique compared to other Class 1 and Class 3 eligible projects. Therefore, Section 15300.2(c) is not applicable to the project.

Scenic Highways (15300.2(d)): *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.*

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) State Scenic Highway System Map, there are no officially designated state scenic highways within or near the project site.¹ project activities would occur within the boundaries of the existing Airport. Therefore, Section 15300.2(d) is not applicable to the project.

Hazardous Waste Sites (Section 15300.2(e)): *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.*

Based on review of the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database, there are two permitted underground storage tanks (USTs), one Cleanup Program Site, and one leaking underground storage tank (LUST) cleanup site associated with the Hollister Municipal Airport address (60 Airport Dr, Hollister, CA 95023).² The Permitted USTs are permitted by the San Benito County Health Department. The Cleanup Program Site and LUST Cleanup are listed under a “Completed – Case Closed” status indicating that potential contamination sources have been investigated and remediated to the satisfaction

¹ Caltrans, California State Scenic Highway, https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/47e2009986264718a5a13a2c81382774#data_s=id%3Awidget_22_output_config_default_g_eocode_0_0%3A0. Accessed February 19, 2026.

² State Water Resource Control Board, GeoTracker Database, https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/?global_id=10481305&geotracker_ust=true. Accessed February 19, 2026.



CITY OF HOLLISTER

Hollister Municipal Airport

60 AIRPORT DRIVE • HOLLISTER, CA 95023

of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Department of Toxic Substances Control. The project site does not include any active hazardous materials sites from lists compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. Therefore, Section 15300.2(e) is not applicable to the project.

Historical Resources (15300.2 (f)): *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

One historic structure, identified as Hollister Airport Hangar #6, was previously recorded adjacent to the project site. However, this resource was determined to be ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and remains unevaluated for potential listing in the California Register of Historic Places (CRHR). As this resource is both ineligible and outside of the project site, no further consideration of this resource is required. Furthermore, the proposed project activities would occur on the runway and would not have the potential to affect off-site cultural resources.

CONCLUSION

As is evidenced by the discussion presented above, the project is consistent with exempt project classes pursuant CEQA Guidelines Section 15301: Existing Facilities and 15303: New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures, and no exceptions listed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 would prevent the application of the Class 1 and Class 3 CE cited in the NOE form. Therefore, the project would not have a significant effect on the environment and no further environmental review is required under CEQA.

If you have any questions or would like additional information and documentation, please contact Jeff Crechriou at jeff.crechriou@hollister.ca.gov.

Respectfully,

Jeff Crechriou
Airport Director
Hollister Municipal Airport
City of Hollister

Encl.

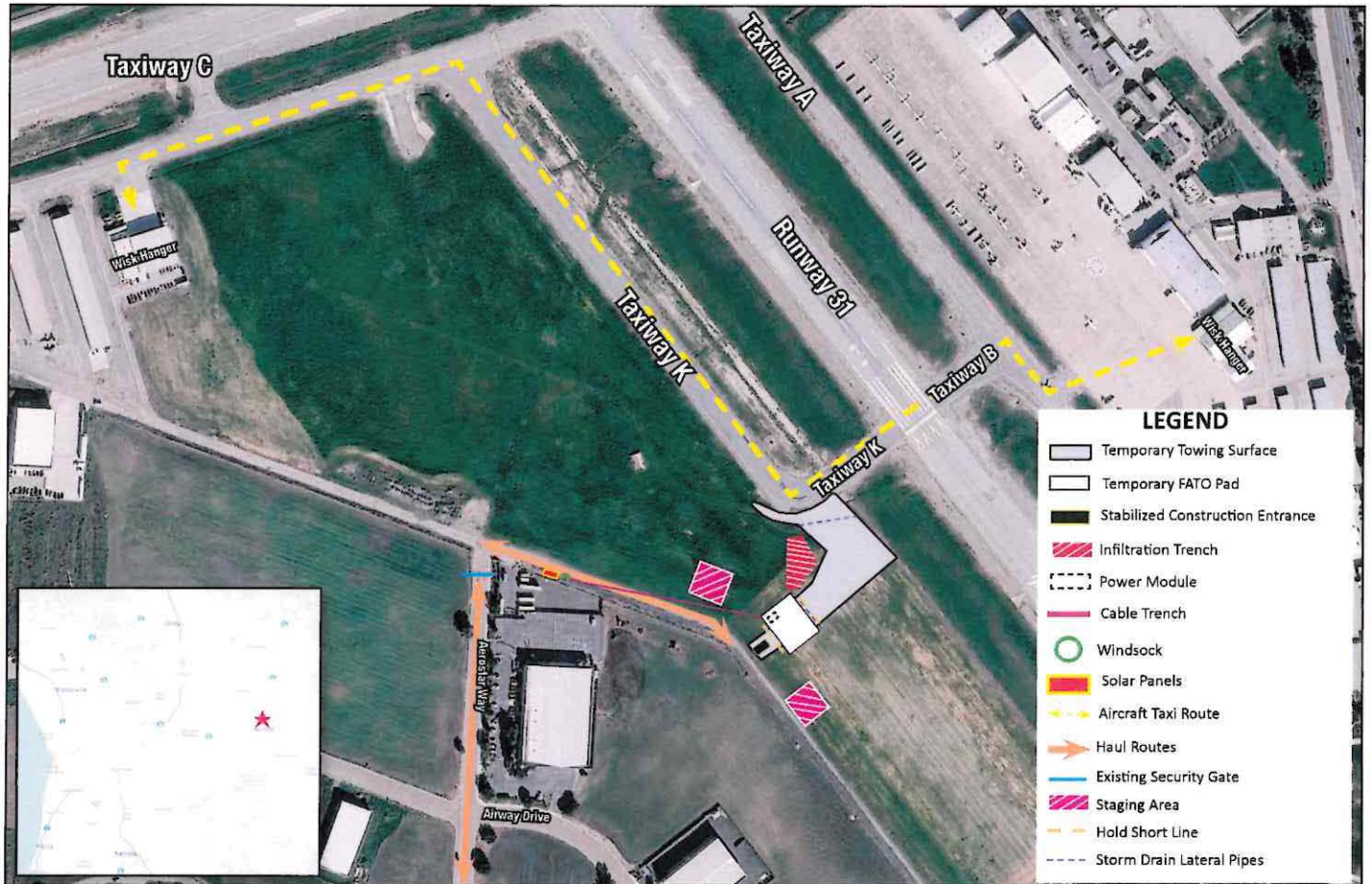


Figure 1: Project Location Map

WISK TEMPORARY FATO AREA

Kimley»Horn