

Church of the Woods Appeal Hearing

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

OCTOBER 20, 2020

Save Our Forest Association & Sierra Club San Bernardino Mountains Group

A solid orange horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide.

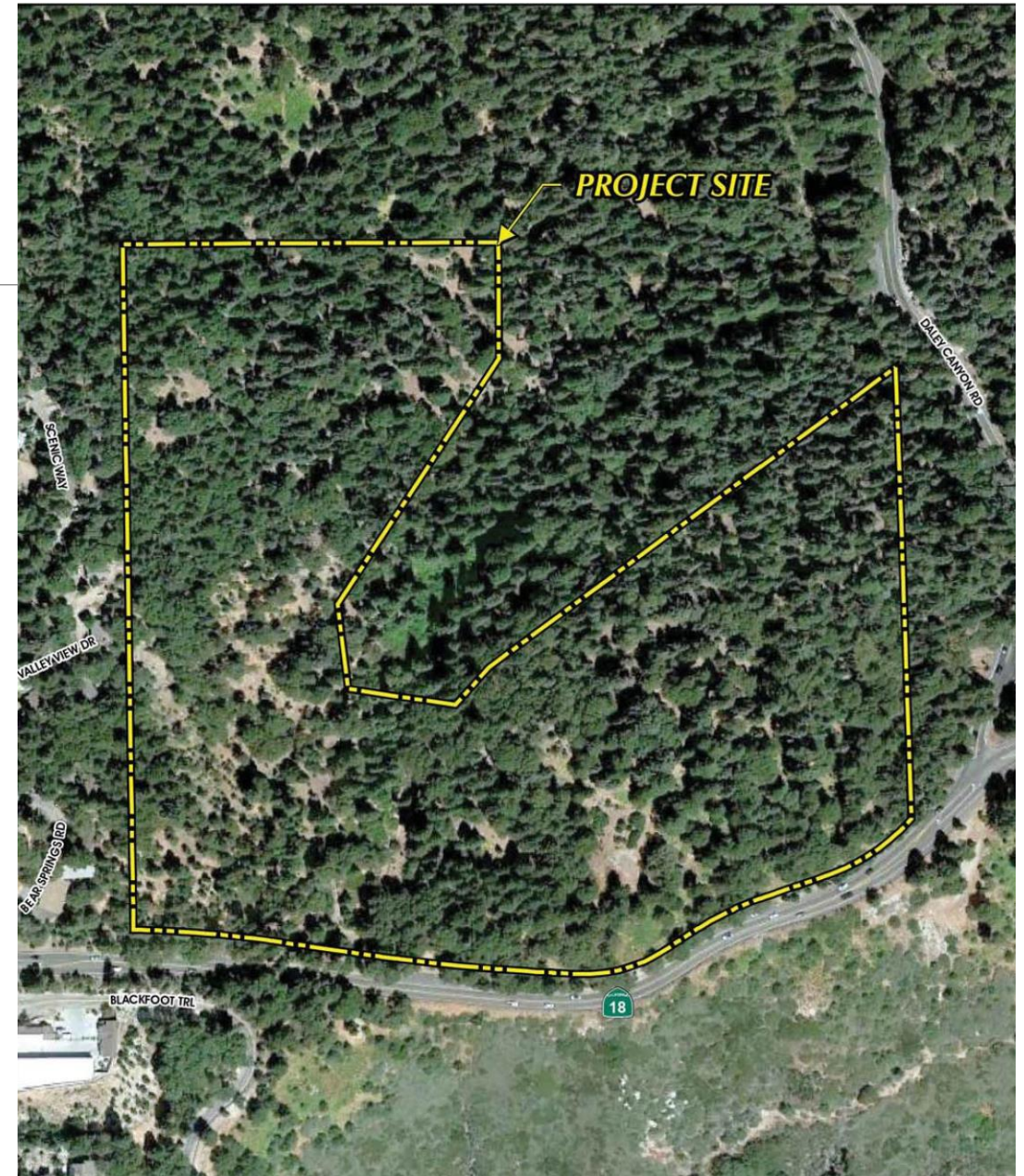


The Appeal Should Be Upheld and the Project Denied

- Large-scale project would destroy a pristine forested site
- EIR does not meet CEQA's requirements
 - EIR fails to explain interaction with Rimforest Storm Drain Project
- Project would have severe environmental impacts:
 - Destroy jurisdictional waters and wetlands
 - Remove and irreparably damage forest and riparian habitat
 - Harm sensitive wildlife
 - Degrade water quality, impacting Lake Arrowhead
 - Increase traffic hazards
 - Increase development in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone
 - Exacerbate wildfire evacuation risks

Project Site

- Forested, hilltop site with perennial stream and spring that feed Little Bear Creek
- Adjacent to Highway 18, a USFS designated Scenic Byway
- Project site overlaps the Rimforest storm drain project site and surrounds it on three sides





Project Setting
(Photos: Hugh A Bialecki, DMD)



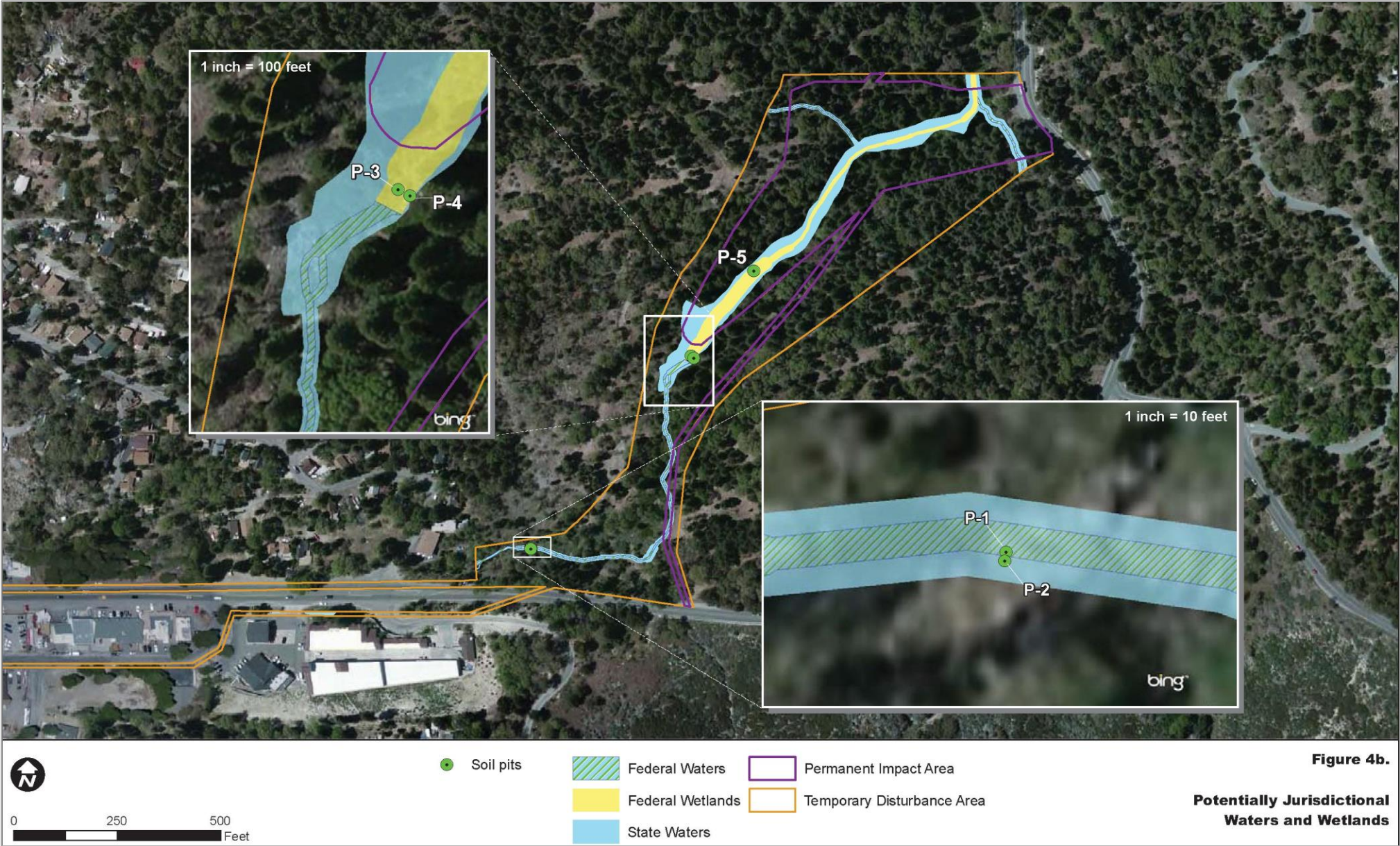
Development Footprint

- Project includes 70,000 square feet of buildings
- 225,000 square feet of parking areas, driveways, and other paved surfaces
- 64,000 square feet of sports fields and courts
- 315,000 cubic yards of soil would be moved, regrading the hilltop



Storm Drain Project

Initial Study for the
Rimforest Storm Drain
Project



Storm Drain Project

Overlay of COTW site plan on jurisdictional waters including temporary and permanent impact area boundaries of Rimforest Storm Drain Project

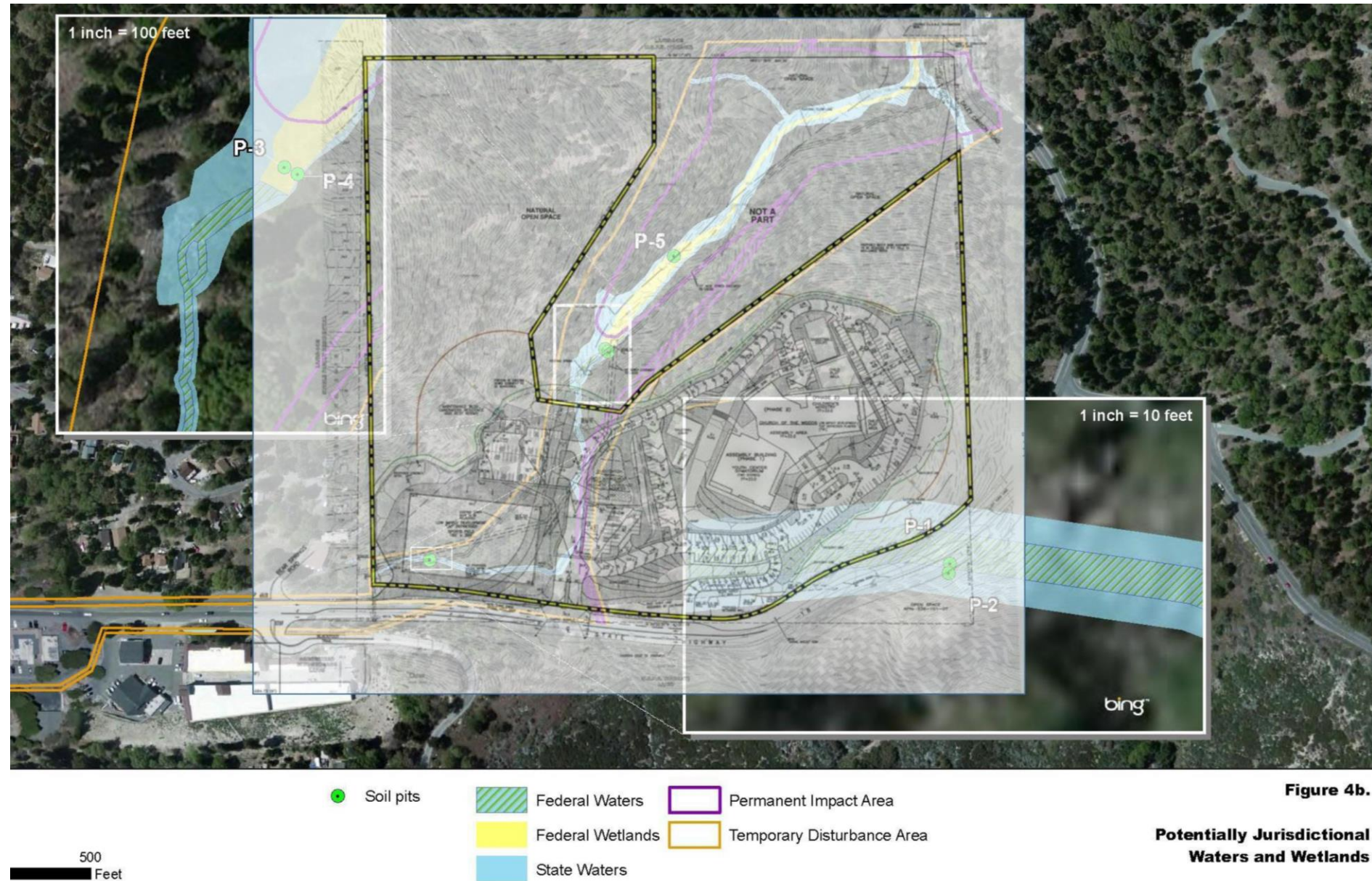


Figure 4b.

Potentially Jurisdictional Waters and Wetlands

EIR uses Storm Drain Project as excuse to ignore wetland and stream impacts.

- EIR fails to identify location and extent of wetlands, spring and stream on the Project site.
- EIR incorrectly claims Storm Drain Project will fully mitigate impacts of COTW Project on riparian habitat, waters and wetlands.
- COTW Project would destroy jurisdictional waters and wetlands that must be restored under Storm Drain Project.
- Final EIR deletes mitigation measure for impacts to waters, wetlands and riparian habitat.

EIR ignores Project's impacts on sensitive wildlife species

- Project site provides habitat for sensitive wildlife species, including:
 - Bald Eagle
 - Peregrine Falcon
 - Andrews' Marble Butterfly
 - American Badger
 - Ringtail
 - Yellow Warbler
 - San Bernardino Flying Squirrel

Right: Peregrine Falcon (Photo: <https://lpfw.org/our-region/wildlife/american-peregrine-falcon/>)

Below: Bald Eagle (Photo: <http://friendsofbigbearvalley.org/eagles/>)



Sensitive Wildlife Species Threatened by Project



Ring-tailed Cat (Photo:
<https://lpfw.org/our-region/wildlife/ring-tailed-cat/>)



California Spotted Owl (Photo:
https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/birds/California_spotted_owl/index.htm)



Yellow Warbler (Photo:
<https://ebird.org/species/yelwar>)



San Bernardino Flying Squirrel (Photo:
<http://coasttocactus.sdnhm.org/animals/san-bernardino-flying-squirrel/>)

EIR Understates Project's Impacts to the Threatened Southern Rubber Boa

- EIR ignores California Department of Fish & Wildlife's recommendations about Boa impact analysis and mitigation.
- EIR mischaracterizes Boa habitat and wrongly concludes that the Boa is not likely to occur within the development footprint.
- Entire Project site is highly suitable Boa habitat which is likely occupied by the species, as the Storm Drain EIR acknowledges.



Southern Rubber Boa (Photo:
<http://www.californiaherps.com/snakes/pages/c.umbratica.html>)

Project Would Impact Water Quality



Stream on COTW site. Photo: Hugh Bialecki



Lake Arrowhead. Photo: <https://www.ala-ca.org/swimming.php>)

Increased Traffic Hazards and Congestion

- Risk of accidents on Hwy 18 due to inadequate sight distance, particularly during foggy, snowy, and icy conditions
- Conflicts with congestion policies of General Plan and Community Plan



State Road 18 (Photo: Hugh A Bialecki, DMD)

Emergency Evacuation During Wildfire

- The few roads in the project area likely would not have enough capacity to enable timely evacuation during a wildfire
- 2003 Old Fire/Grand Prix Fire showed difficulty of evacuating project area: 28-mile traffic jam on SR-18

Photo: 2003 Old Fire jumping Highway 18. (Photo: Troy C. Whitman, Cypress, CA)



Conclusion

- EIR fails to comply with CEQA
- Project would:
 - damage streams
 - destroy wildlife habitat
 - harm protected species
 - degrade water quality
 - increase traffic hazards and wildfire evacuation risks
- Appeal should be upheld and Project denied.

