

ANNEX 18. COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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Santa Clara County acquired its first parkland in 1924, purchasing 400 acres near Cupertino, which became Stevens Creek County Park. In 1956, the Department of Parks and Recreation was formed. Currently, the regional parks system has expanded to 29 parks encompassing nearly 48,000 acres.

Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department (County Parks) provides a sustainable system of diverse regional parks, trails, and natural areas that connects people with the natural environment, and supports healthy lifestyles, while balancing recreation opportunities with the protection of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources

(<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/parks/AboutUs/Pages/About-the-County-Regional-Parks.aspx>).

County Parks are regional parks located close to home, yet away from the pressures of the valley's urban lifestyle. The parks offer opportunities for recreation in a natural environment to all County residents. Regional parks are larger in size, usually more than 200 acres, than local neighborhood or community parks. Many of the County's regional parks also feature points of local historic interest. County park locations are shown in Figure 18.1.

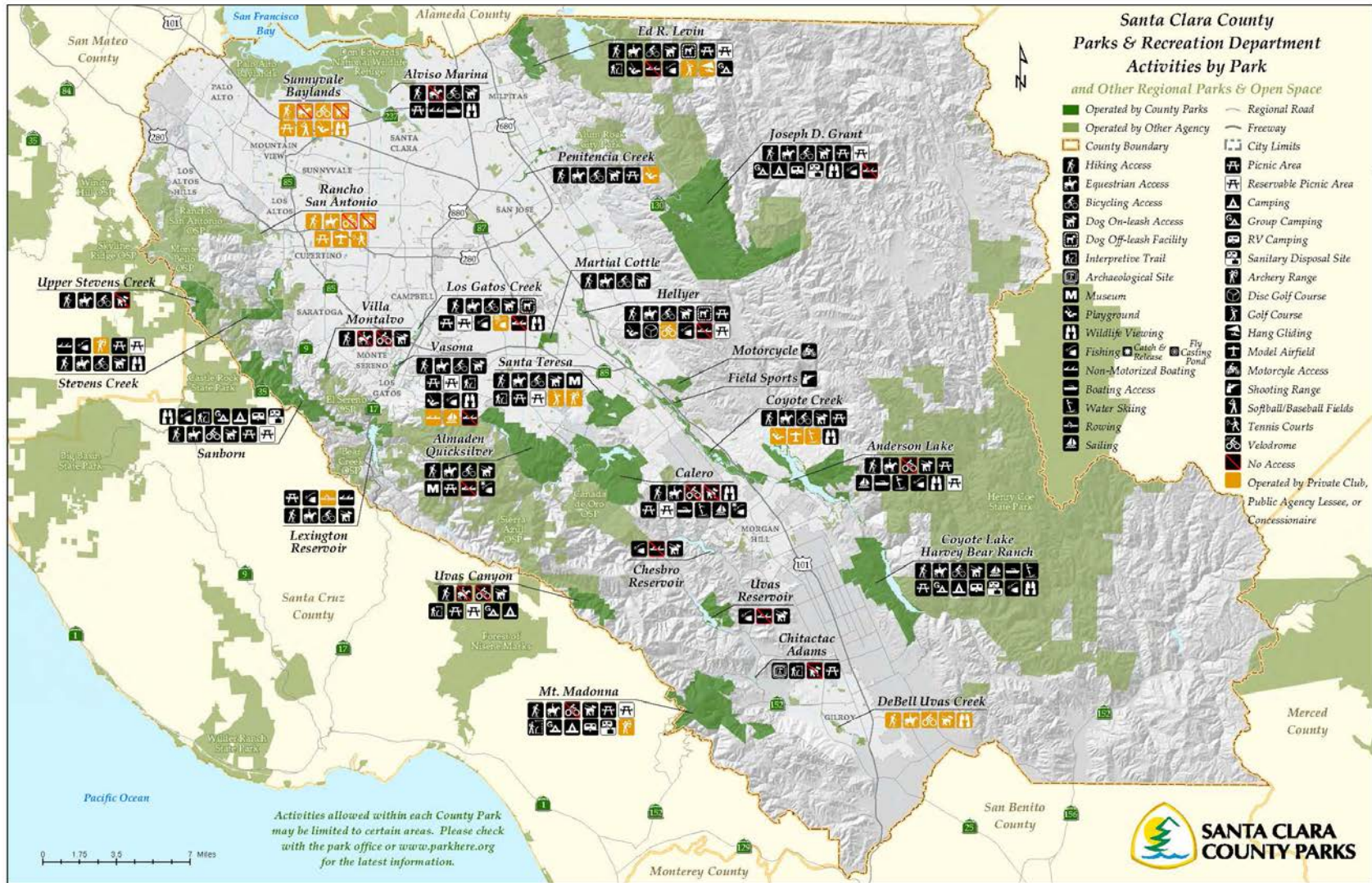


Figure 18.1. County park locations.

ORGANIZATION AND JURISDICTION

Santa Clara County Parks is governed by the Board of Supervisors. The Park Charter directs the Board of Supervisors to the Parks and Recreation Element of the County General Plan as their reference for County Parks Planning.

County Park Rangers act as the public safety branch for the Santa Clara County Parks, ensuring the safety of park visitors and protection of park resources.

PLANNING TEAM PARTICIPATION

Santa Clara County Parks has actively engaged in the Community Wildfire Protection Planning (CWPP) planning process through attendance at multiple CWPP community workshops and attendance at an agency workshop. Current and planned County Parks activities related to fire prevention and suppression are briefly described below.

RELEVANT PLANS AND POLICIES

Prevention and suppression of wildland fire and use of prescribed fire as a resource management tool are conducted under policies and plans approved by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. The most important of these documents are summarized briefly below.

The Parkland Range Management Policy was adopted in 1992. This policy establishes standards and guidelines for the use of livestock grazing to achieve natural resource management objectives, primarily control of exotic invasive plants and improved habitat for native plants and animals. A second major objective of the grazing program is to reduce risks of wildland fire in Parks grasslands and oak woodlands. Grazing under approved natural resource management plans or grazing management plans is managed to reduce residual dry matter (RDM) to 600 to 1,000 pounds/acre, depending on topographic slope. These RDM levels are equivalent to stubble heights of roughly 4 to 6 inches, much lower than the heights of ungrazed annual grasses. The flame heights and rate of spread in grazed pastures are correspondingly lower than in ungrazed areas. A total of roughly 11,000 acres is currently grazed annually on County Parks lands, including parts of Calero, Santa Teresa, Ed Levin, Joseph D. Grant, and Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch County Parks.

Several County Parks have Natural Resource Management Plans approved by the Board of Supervisors. These plans provide guidelines for both the use of prescribed fire and prevention and suppression of wildland fires. Plans are available for Ed Levin (1996), Joseph D. Grant (1996), Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch (2004), Santa Teresa (2010), and Upper Stevens Creek County Parks (1993). These plans specify objectives, constraints, and procedures to be followed by County Parks staff when using prescribed fire or fighting wildfires.

County Parks generally follow the defensible space requirements for State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands under Public Resources Code (PRC) 4291. These requirements provide for defensible space of 100 feet from each side and from the front and rear of structures, but not beyond the property line except as required by state, local, or federal regulations and determinations.

Vegetation treatment of County Parks lands in the vicinity of neighboring private structures is a discretionary decision of County Parks in SRAs and may be affected by local regulations.

The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency has recently issued standards for wildfire and prescribed fire in conservation reserves established under the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan (Harris 2016). County Parks intends to enroll several thousand acres of Parks lands as conservation reserves, and these guidelines will apply to those reserves.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

County Parks signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in 2012 to standardize procedures to be followed when Parks staff are engaged in activities with potential to ignite wildfires, such as welding, mowing, and operating machinery. Parks staff are required to take precautions to reduce the chance for ignitions, including checking fire forecast conditions, monitoring weather, maintaining spark arrestors, and having fire guards with appropriate suppression equipment on hand. Under particularly dangerous conditions, all activities with a risk of wildfire ignition are halted.

County Parks signed agreements in 2015 with two agencies that provide skilled labor for fuel reduction projects. These agencies are the California Conservation Corps, stationed in Watsonville, and the San Jose Conservation Corps, stationed in north San Jose. Both of these agencies, with funding provided by Parks, can engage in fuel reduction projects on Parks lands. Both agreements extend for 5-year periods (2015–2020) and each provides for expenditures of up to \$1,000,000 in Parks funds.

County Parks engages with local Fire Safe councils to implement fuel reduction projects on Parks lands. Generally, funding and staff resources are provided by the Fire Safe councils and Parks provides CEQA coverage and issues a special use permit for the work. In 2015, the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council funded a fuels reduction project at Mount Madonna County Park with a grant from PG&E. In 2016, the South Skyline Fire Safe Council implemented a shaded fuel break on Black Road in Sanborn County Park. Several other fuel breaks are currently being planned.

A Vegetation Management Program (VMP) for Joseph D. Grant County Park was approved by CAL FIRE and County Parks in 2016, and extends until 2019. This VMP provides for cooperative prescribed burning of more than 1,000 acres of grassland and brush over the 3-year period.

Local and state firefighting agencies often request the use of County Parks for wildland fire training, sometimes including the use of live fire (Figure 18.2). These training events are authorized under interagency memoranda of understanding or special use permits. Generally, Parks staff participate in the training, and if live fire is used, resource management objectives are achieved through the use of fire.



Figure 18.2. Wildland fire training, Santa Teresa County Park, May 18, 2016 (courtesy of Craig Rose, San Jose Fire Department).

GEOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

The Operations (ranger) staff of County Parks maintains a Fire and Emergency Response Plan (FERP) for all county parks. This plan includes information on hydrants, water drafting sources, landing zones, Incident Command Post (ICP) locations, and safety areas (Table 18.1).

The County Parks trail network includes more than 300 miles of trails. Segments of several trails are located on or near ridgetops. Some of these are single track trails, but most are wide enough for vehicular access. These trail segments could potentially be used as defensive fuel breaks during suppression of wildfires. However, in almost all cases, the ridgetop trail segments would need to be anchored to other defensive features in order to provide a useful defensive position. In addition, thinning of vegetation along these trails would be needed to make them effective. Ridgetop trail segments currently total roughly 42 miles.

Several park roads and trails could be used as escape routes for local residents and the general public. For example, the Knibs Knob Trail in Uvas Canyon County Park could be used as an alternate egress for residents along Croy Canyon Road in an emergency.

STAFF AND EQUIPMENT RESOURCES

All county employees serve when needed as disaster assistance workers. In addition, many County Parks employees are trained and equipped to suppress wildland fires. County Parks radios have CAL FIRE and County Fire frequencies programmed so that Parks staff can communicate with local fire crews. Staff and equipment resources available for firefighting are summarized below.

Table 18.1. Fire Suppression Infrastructure at County Parks

Park Name	Hydrants	Water Sources	Landing Zones	ICPs	Safety Areas
Almaden Quicksilver	8	2	7	5	3
Anderson Lake	2	1	2	3	3
Calero	3	5	4	3	2
Chesbro Reservoir	0	1	1	1	1
Coyote Creek Parkway	0	19	4	2	1
Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch	3	8	7	3	5
Ed Levin	25	3	3	2	1
Hellyer	12	1	1	4	8
Joseph D. Grant	12	9	4	3	1
Lexington Reservoir	3	2	7	5	3
Martial Cottle	21	5	1	1	1
Los Gatos Creek	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle	1	1	2	2	1
Mt. Madonna	12	7	3	4	2
Rancho San Antonio	8	0	0	0	0
Sanborn	8	5	4	3	3
Santa Teresa	1	3	2	6	4
Stevens Creek	4	4	3	5	7
Upper Stevens Creek	0	0	1	1	1
Uvas Canyon	3	1	2	2	3
Uvas Reservoir	0	1	2	1	1
Vasona	13	1	2	10	7
Total	139	79	62	66	58

OPERATIONS

For Park Ranger Operations, Santa Clara County is divided into three regions (Figure 18.3). Region 1 encompasses the northwest portion of the County, which includes Sanborn, Skyline, Upper Stevens Creek, Stevens Creek, Lexington, Villa Montalvo, Los Gatos Creek Trail, Almaden Quicksilver, and Calero Parks. Region 2 covers the northeast section of the County, including Ed Levin, Grant, Alviso, Penitencia Creek, Martial Cottle, Hellyer, Coyote Creek Trail, Motorcycle Park, and Field Sports Park. Region 3 captures the South Santa Clara County Parks of Anderson, Coyote Creek Trail, Chesbro, Uvas, Harvey Bear, Coyote, and Mt. Madonna. All 52 park rangers are qualified and equipped to initiate initial attacks on wildfires. Rangers carry personal protective equipment (PPE) and have backpack pumps and hand tools in their vehicles. In addition, at least one ranger vehicle per Park Unit is equipped with 75- or 100-gallon slip-on pump units with gasoline or air-powered charge lines (Figure 18.4). The rangers recently acquired two fully equipped Type 6 engines with 150-gallon tanks that can support progressive hose lays (Figure 18.5). Generally the first ranger, or the ranking ranger, at a fire will act as incident commander until relieved by responding state or local overhead. All rangers receive annual fire refresher training, but are not formally issued red cards for dispatch outside parks.

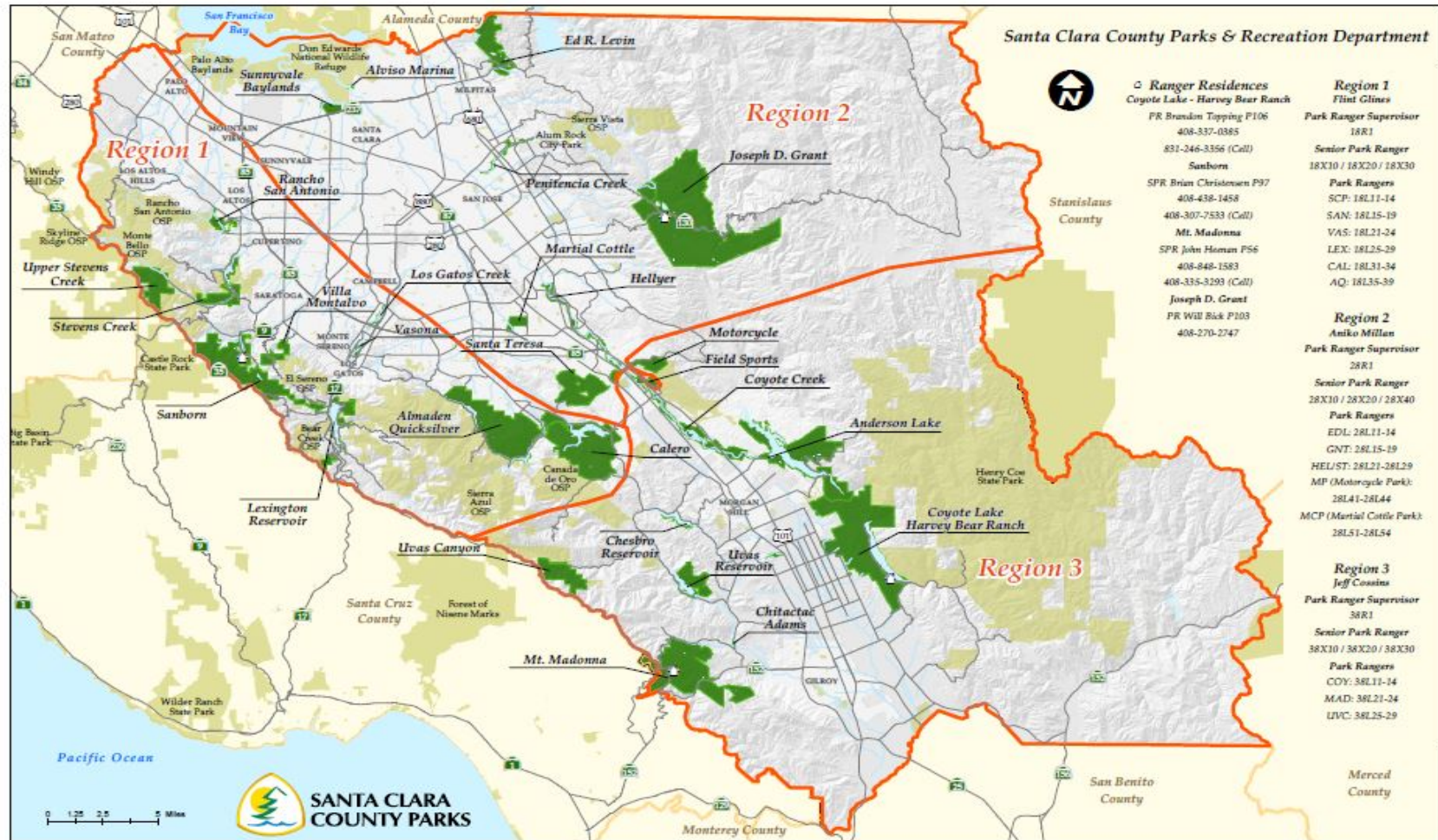


Figure 18.3. Map showing regional organization of County Parks Operations staff.



Figure 18.4. County Parks rangers with slip-on unit mopping up a wildfire in Santa Teresa County Park, 2010.



Figure 18.5. Mobile attack at Santa Teresa County Park using a Type 6 engine, May 18, 2016 (courtesy of Craig Rose, San Jose Fire Department).

MAINTENANCE

As of 2016, all newly hired parks unit maintenance staff are required to complete wildland fire training through West Valley College. In the future, all of the roughly 60 maintenance workers in part units will have this training. Each park has one or more maintenance pickup trucks equipped with 50- to 100-gallon slip-on units (most maintenance vehicles are equipped with 50-gallon slip-on units). However, maintenance workers do not have PPE and cannot be dispatched to a wildfire. Their role is in fire prevention, providing fire guards for high and low risk activities. The maintenance staff also has a 2,000-gallon water tender that can be made available for fires.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

All Natural Resource Management (NRM) staff are trained and equipped to initiate or assist with initial attacks on wildfires within parks. Each NRM employee has full PPE, hand tools, and a backpack pump. The NRM vehicle for Region 1 has a 125-gallon gas powered slip-on unit. NRM staff are frequently used as resource advisors for prescribed fires and wildfires, and used for development of prescriptive measures to remediate impacts from wildland fires and suppression methods during wildland fires (Figure 18.6).

NRM programs to manage vegetation and forest health also benefit fire prevention. The NRM staff implements grazing and prescribed fire programs that reduce fuels in grassland areas. Tree safety and forest health projects reduce the amount of fuel loading in forested parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Figure 18.6. County Parks NRM Program Manager conferring with CAL FIRE captain during suppression of wildfire in Santa Teresa County Park, 2010.

RISK/HAZARD ASSESSMENT

Figure 18.7 provides a Risk/Hazard Assessment for Santa Clara County. For more information on the development of this assessment please refer to Chapter 4 in the countywide CWPP.

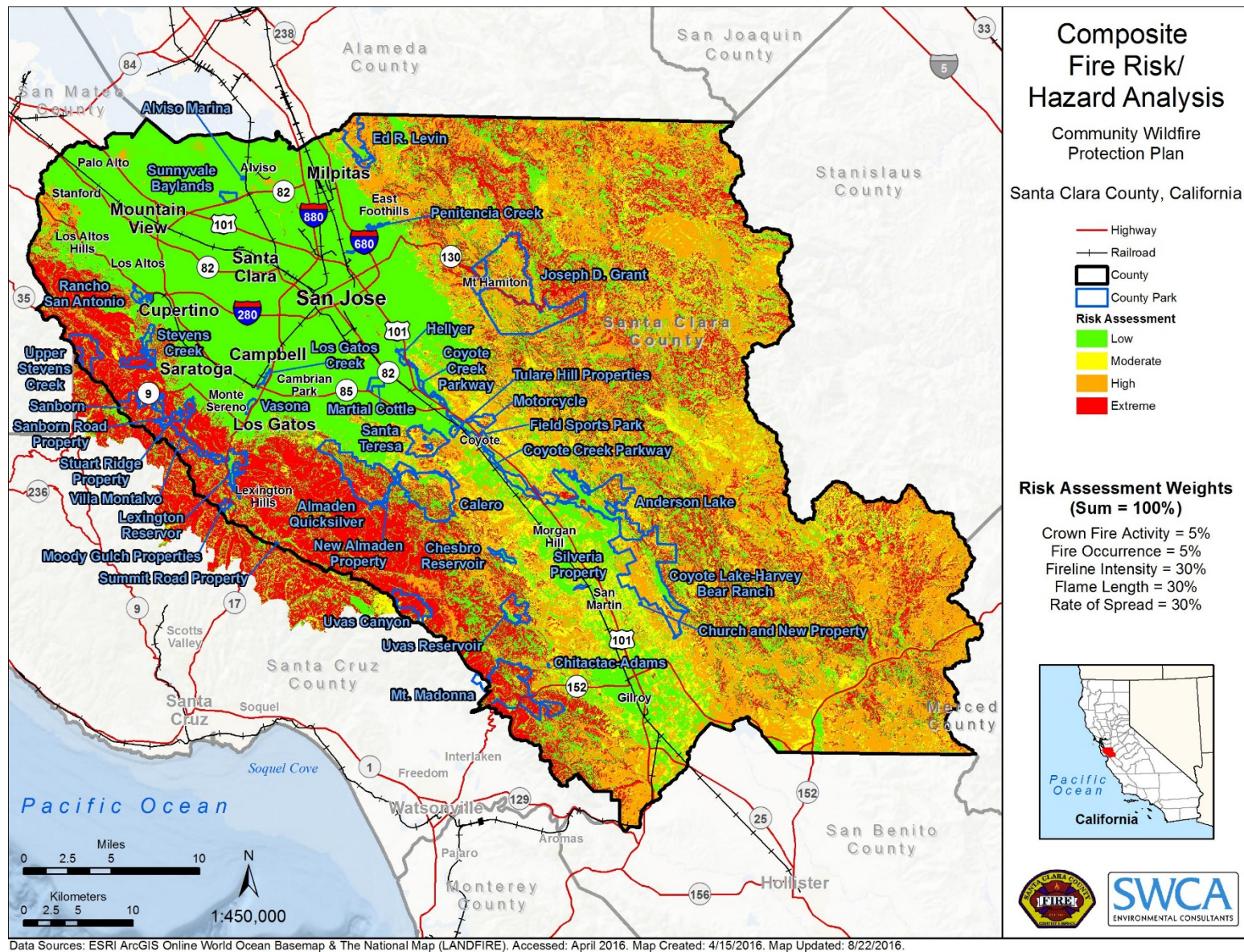


Figure 18.7. Santa Clara County Risk/Hazard Assessment including portions of Santa Cruz County.

FIRE HISTORY

Figure 18.8 provides fire history and ignition history for the County. For more fire history information please see Figure 3.5 in the main Santa Clara County CWPP document.

HAZARDOUS FUEL CHARACTERISTICS

Santa Clara County includes a range of vegetation communities that differ depending upon elevation, precipitation, and slope. Chaparral vegetation is often found on south-facing slopes, where winter precipitation is relatively high, but dry summers are common. The chaparral will have long flame lengths under either moderate or extreme weather scenarios. The nature of these fuels is to burn quickly and intensely. Oak woodlands, comprising a variety of oak species, are also interspersed throughout, as well as mixed conifer comprising knob cone pine and gray pine. A fire in either the mixed conifer or hardwood would likely be a surface fire with patches of active behavior and fairly low rates of spread. However, active fire behavior is possible in this vegetation type under extreme weather conditions, especially where there is high surface loading. Coastal coniferous forest communities such as redwoods and Douglas-fir are located at lower elevations where precipitation is high, fog is common, and temperatures are moderate. Fire spread is generally limited in this fuel type; however, given the right combination of weather conditions, surface fire can be expected to burn uphill. Areas with increased fuel loading from dead and down materials may experience crowning under the right conditions. The varied vegetation composition can result in a range of wildfire hazard.

For fuel model information, please refer to Section 4.6.3 and Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4 of the main Santa Clara County CWPP document.

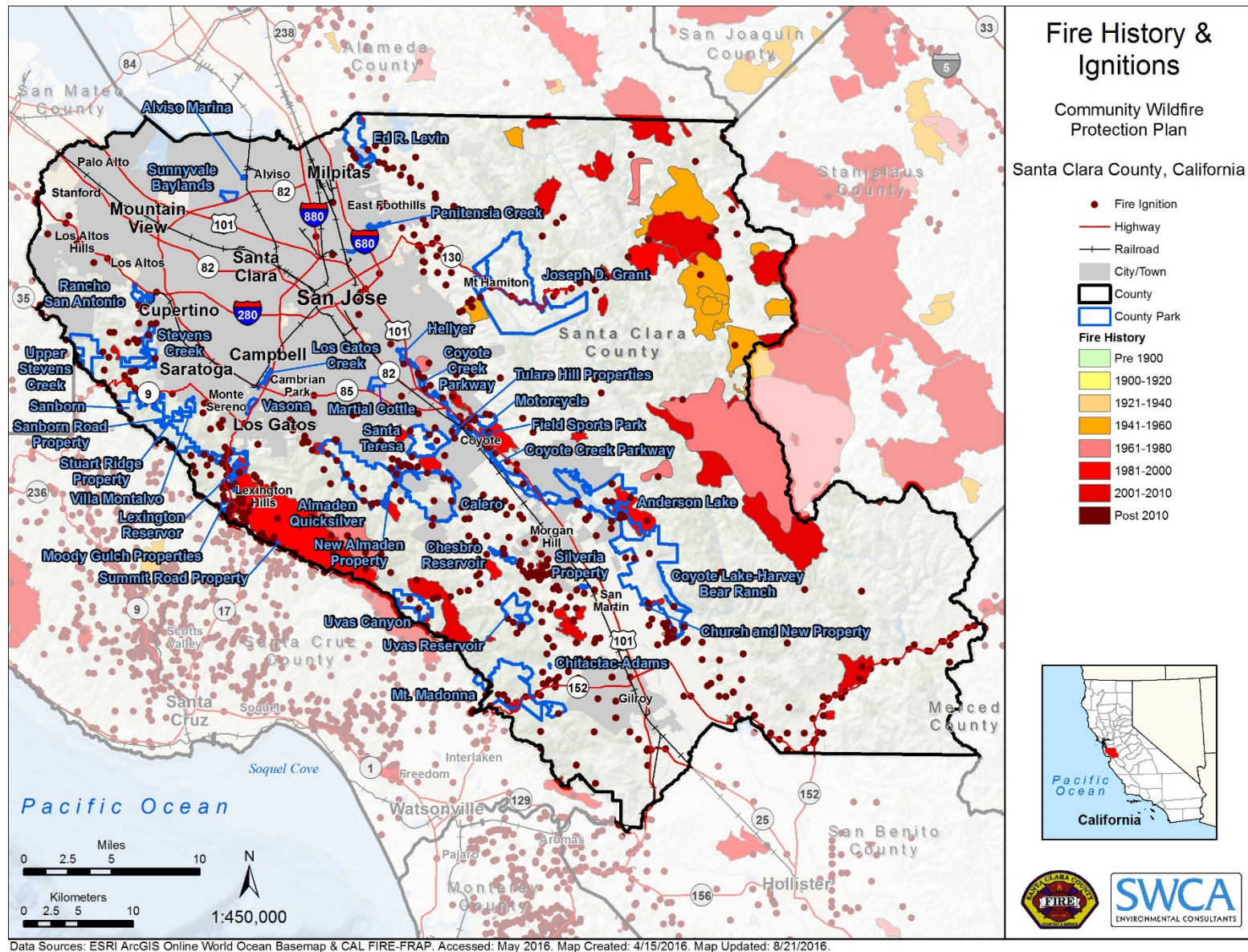


Figure 18.8. Fire history and ignitions in the wildland urban interface planning area.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY PARKS FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

County Parks has information, facilities, and staff resources that contribute to countywide wildfire prevention and suppression. County Parks is actively working with local fire agencies and Fire Safe councils to implement wildfire risk reduction projects. County Parks have safe areas and escape routes that can be used by both park visitors and local residents. A number of County Park trails may be useful as defensible lines during wildfire suppression. Current and planned fire prevention activities on County Parks are summarized in Table 18.2.

Figure 18.9-Figure 18.28 illustrate facilities (including evacuation routes) on County Park properties throughout the County.

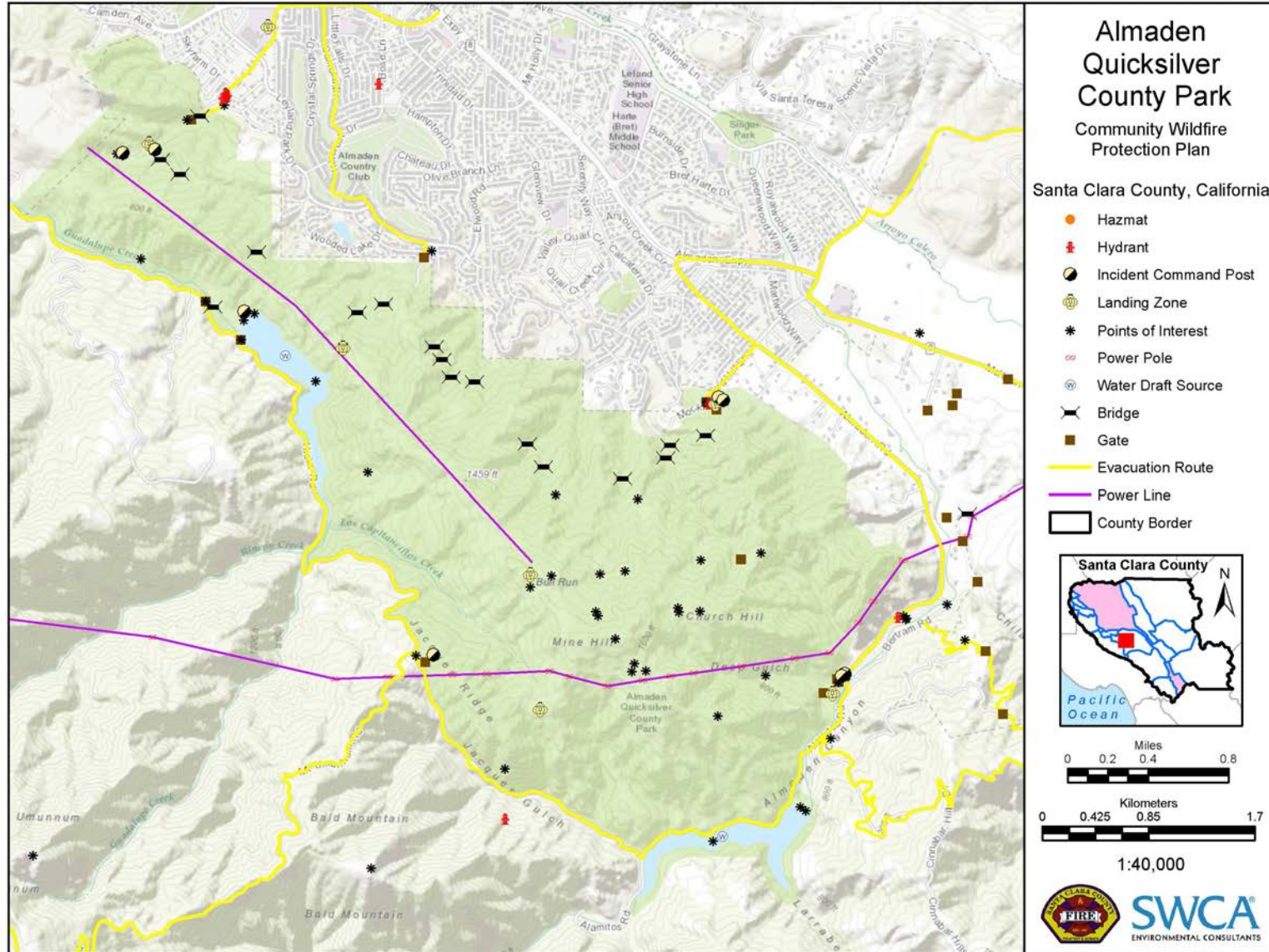


Figure 18.9. Almaden Quicksilver County Park Emergency Management

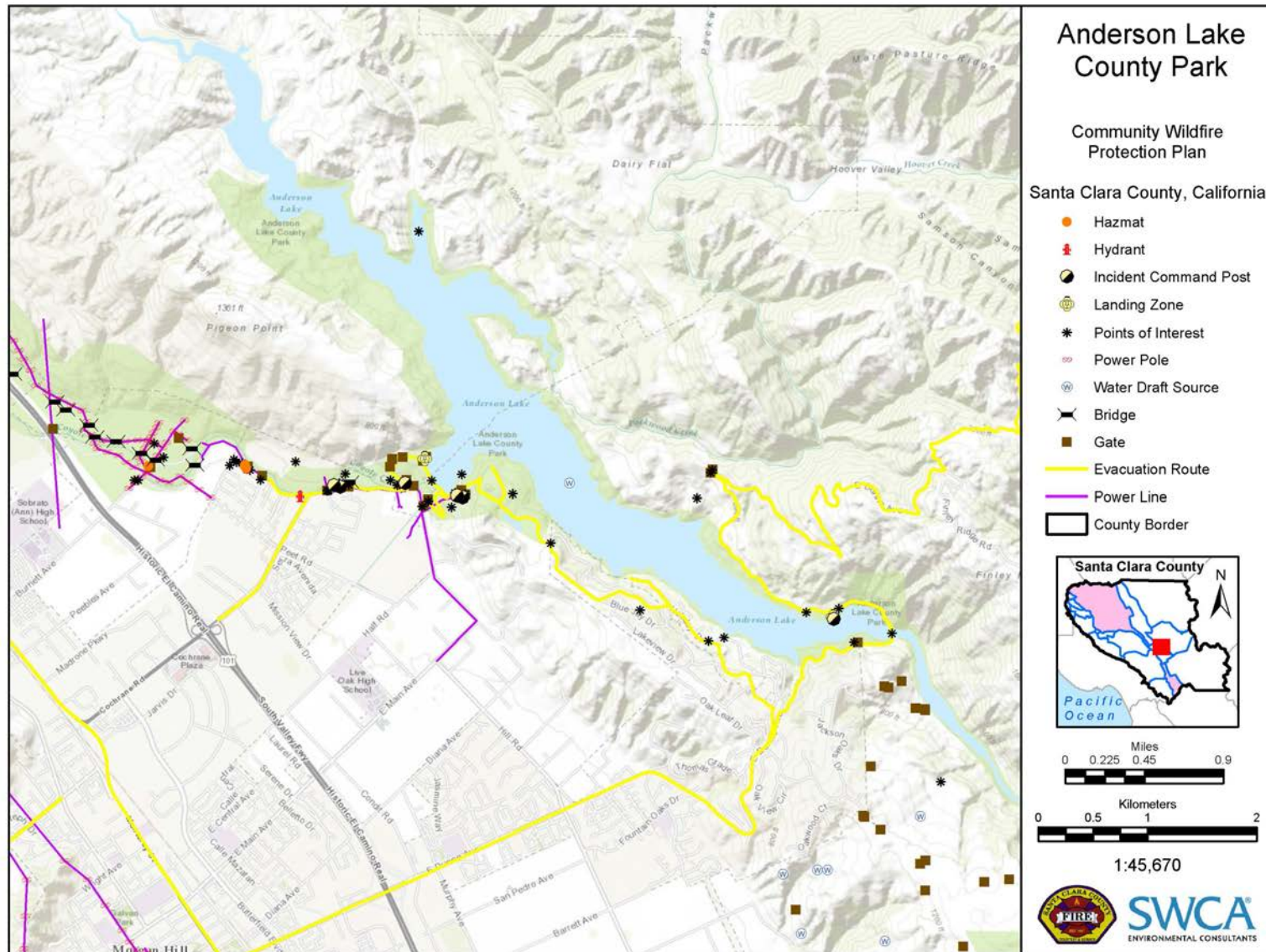


Figure 18.10. Anderson Lake County Park Emergency Management.

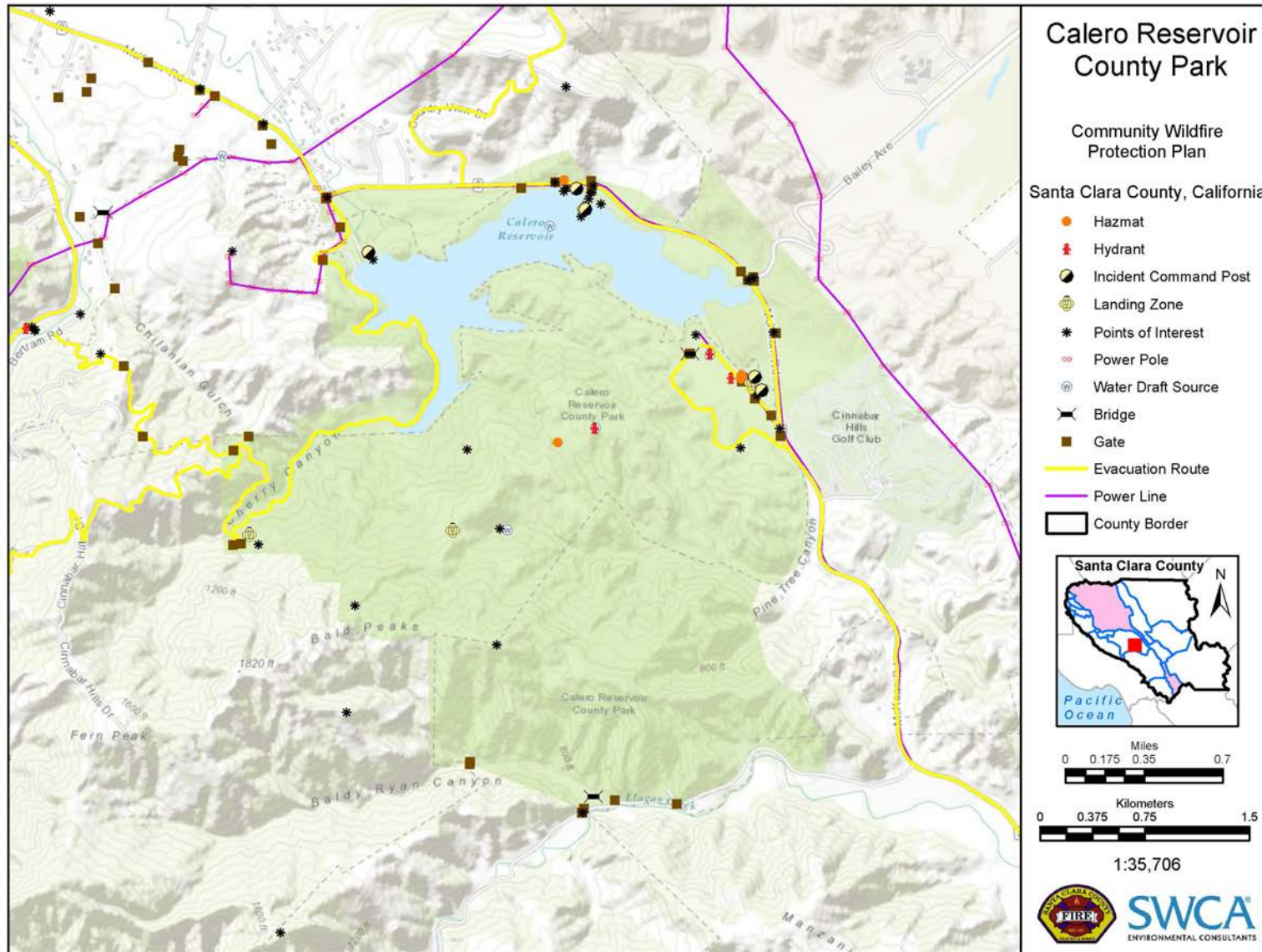


Figure 18.11. Calero Reservoir County Park Emergency Management

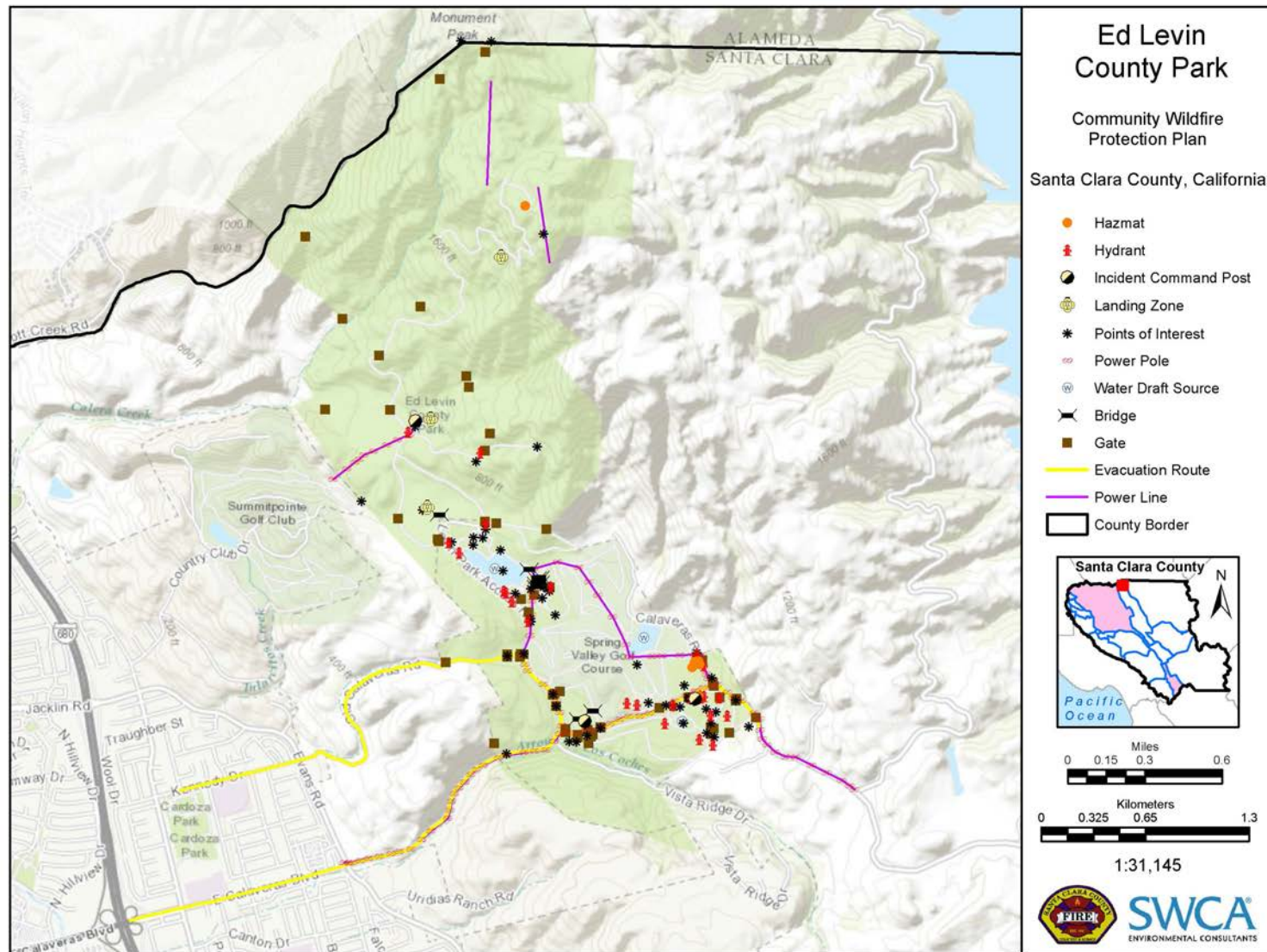


Figure 18.13. Ed Levin County Park Emergency Management

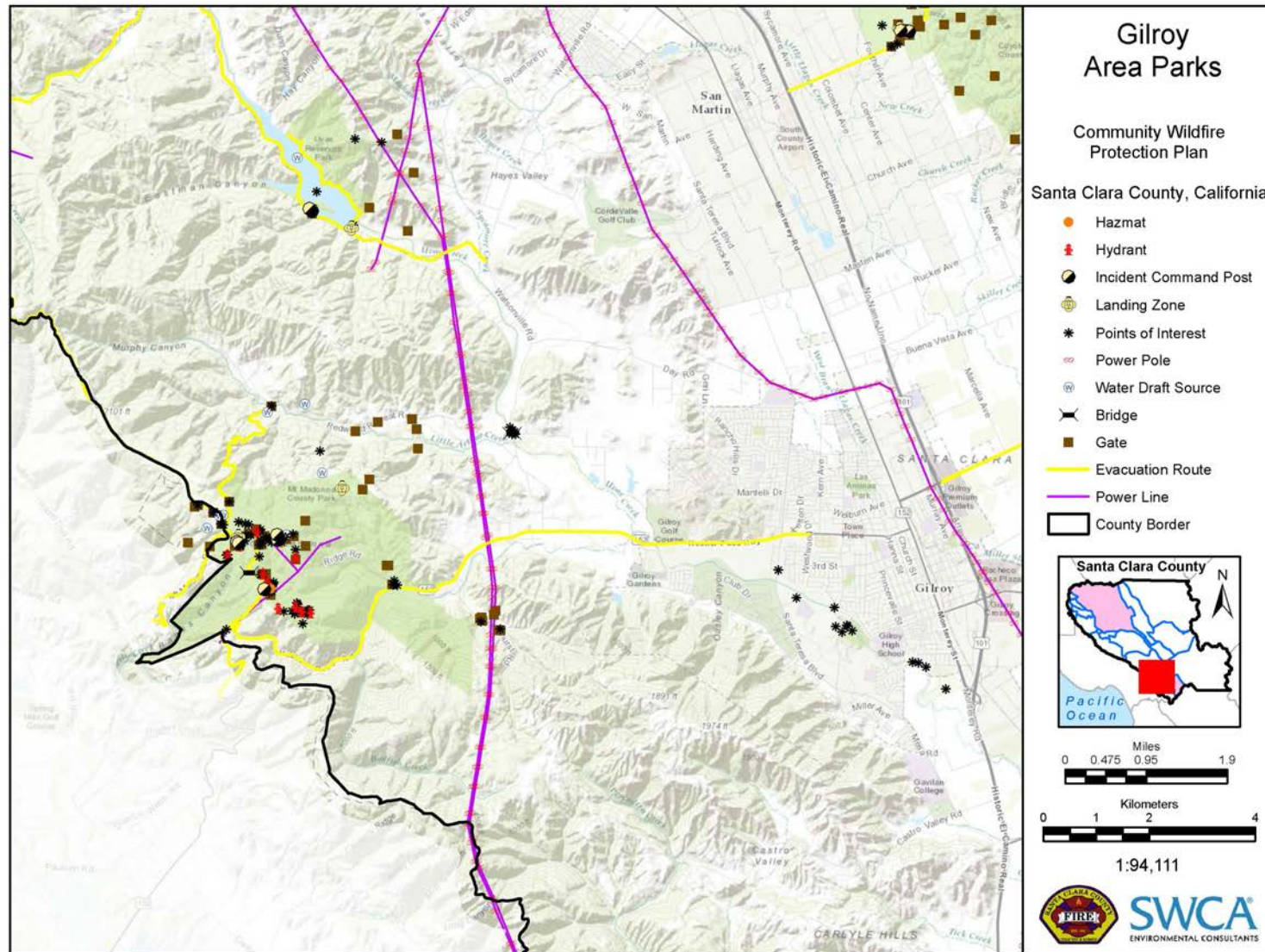


Figure 18.14. Gilroy Area Parks Emergency Management

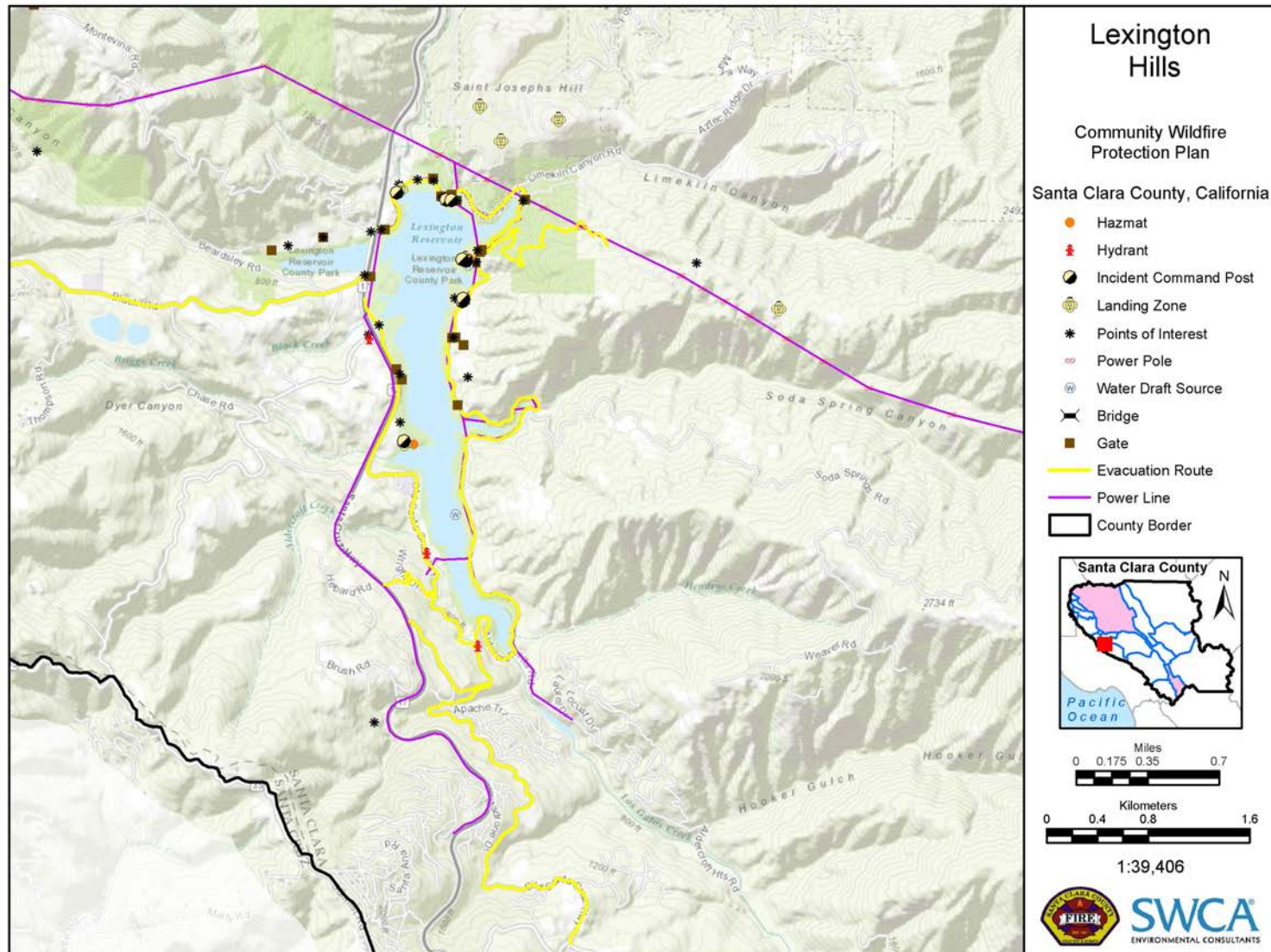


Figure 18.15. Lexington Hills Reservoir County Park Emergency Management

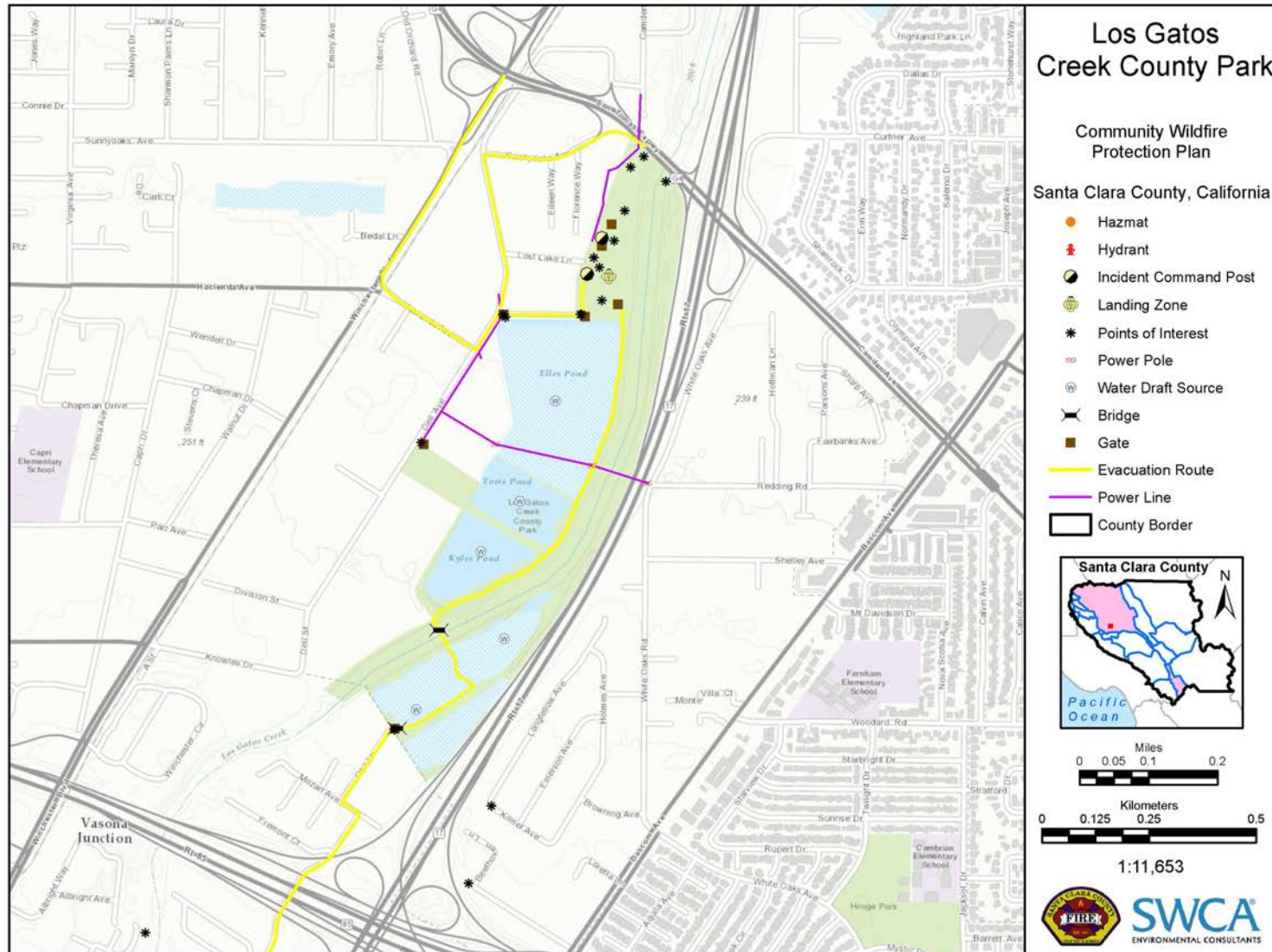


Figure 18.16. Los Gatos Creek County Park Emergency Management

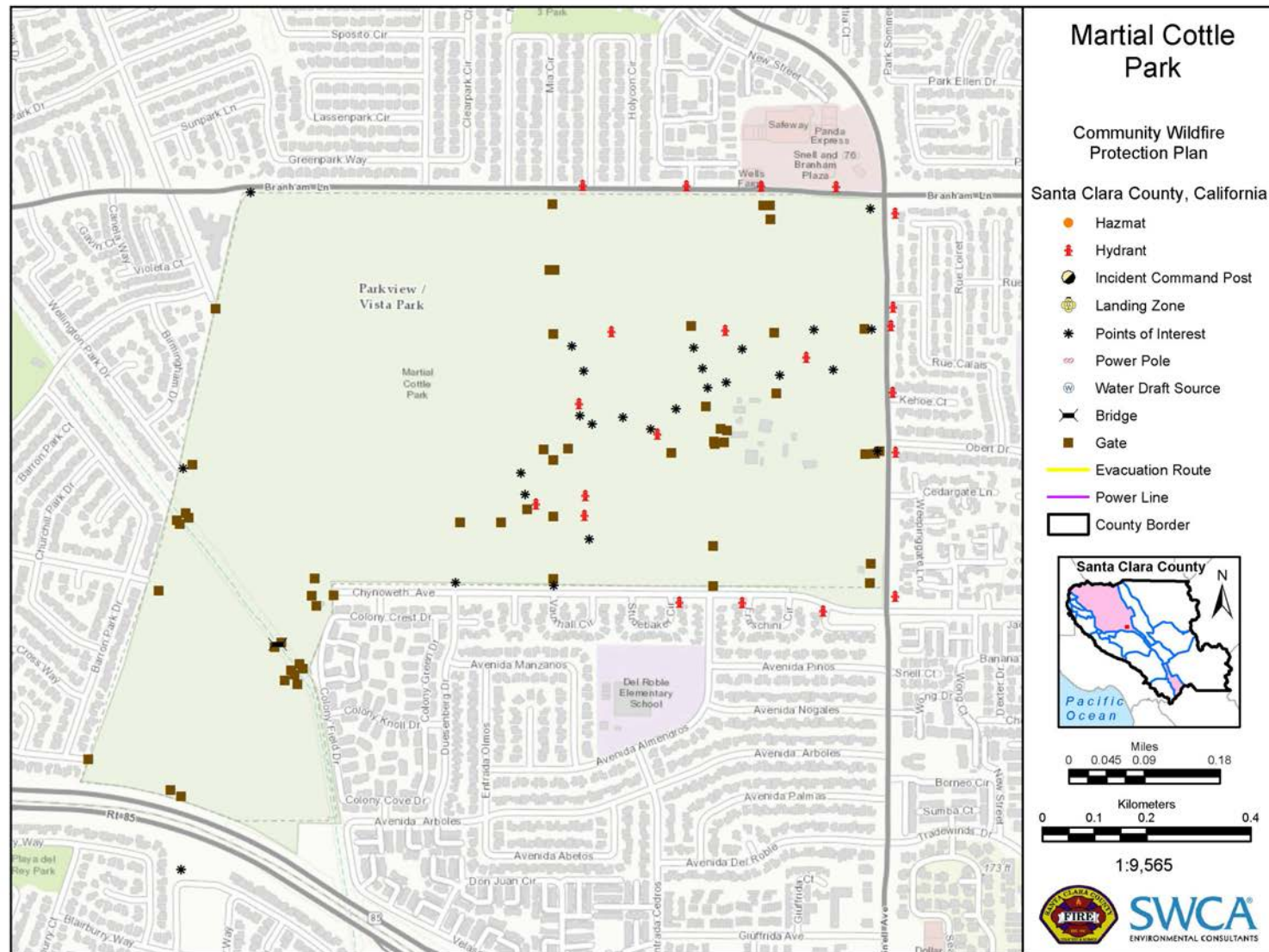


Figure 18.17. Martle Cottle County Park Emergency Management

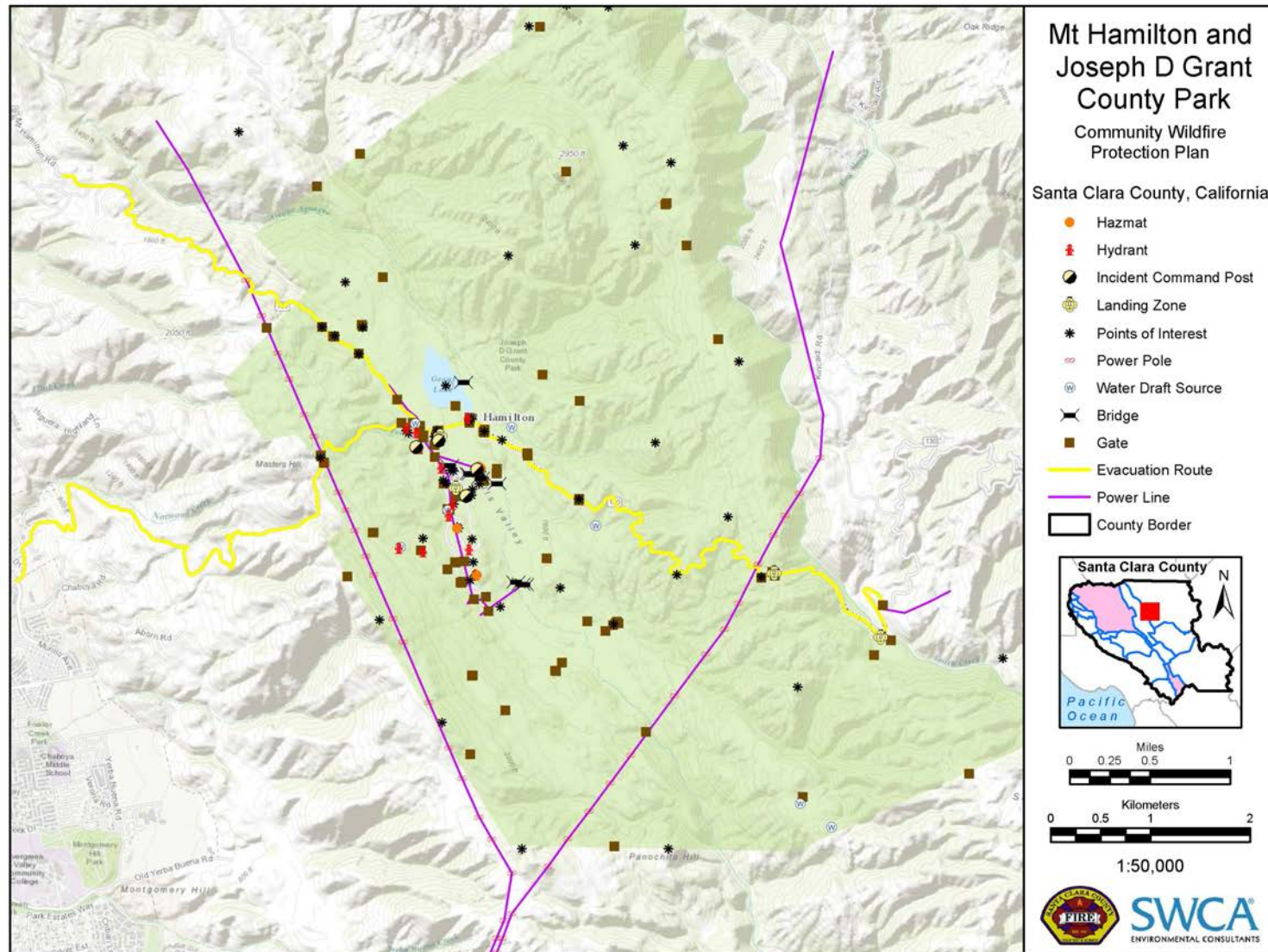


Figure 18.18. Mt Hamilton and Joseph D Grant County Park Emergency Management

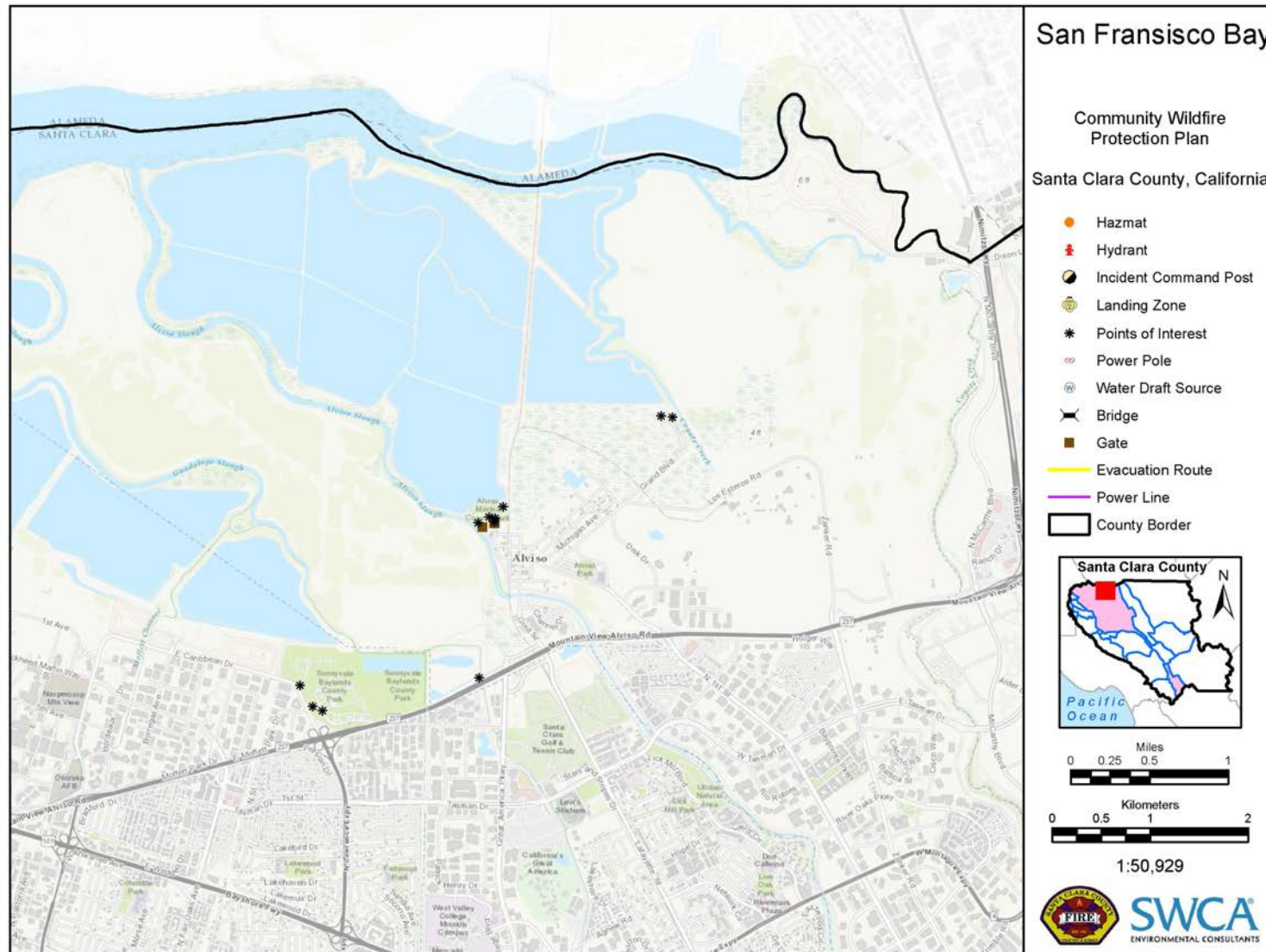


Figure 18.21. San Francisco Bay County Park Emergency Management

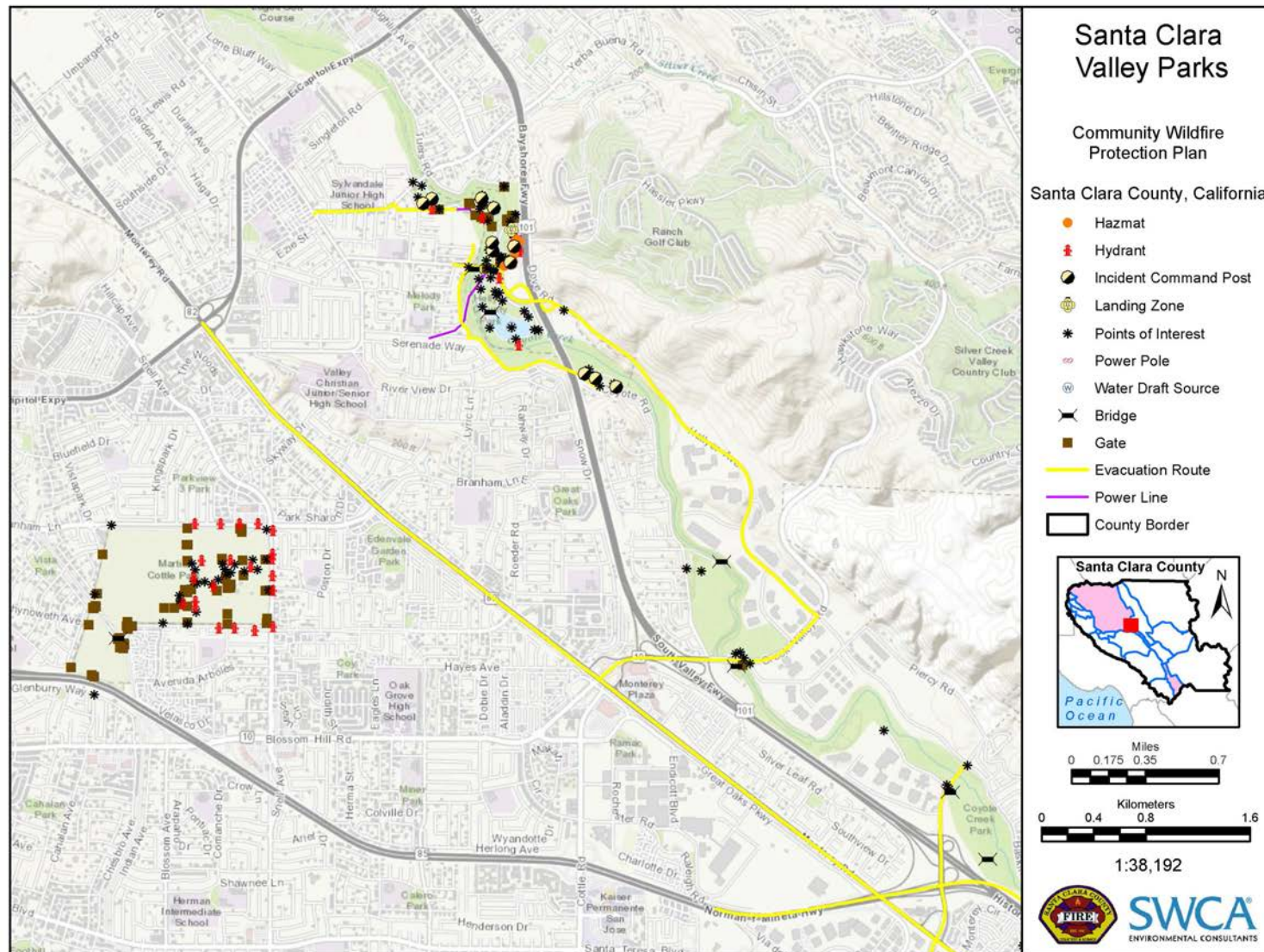


Figure 18.23. Santa Clara Valley Parks Emergency Management

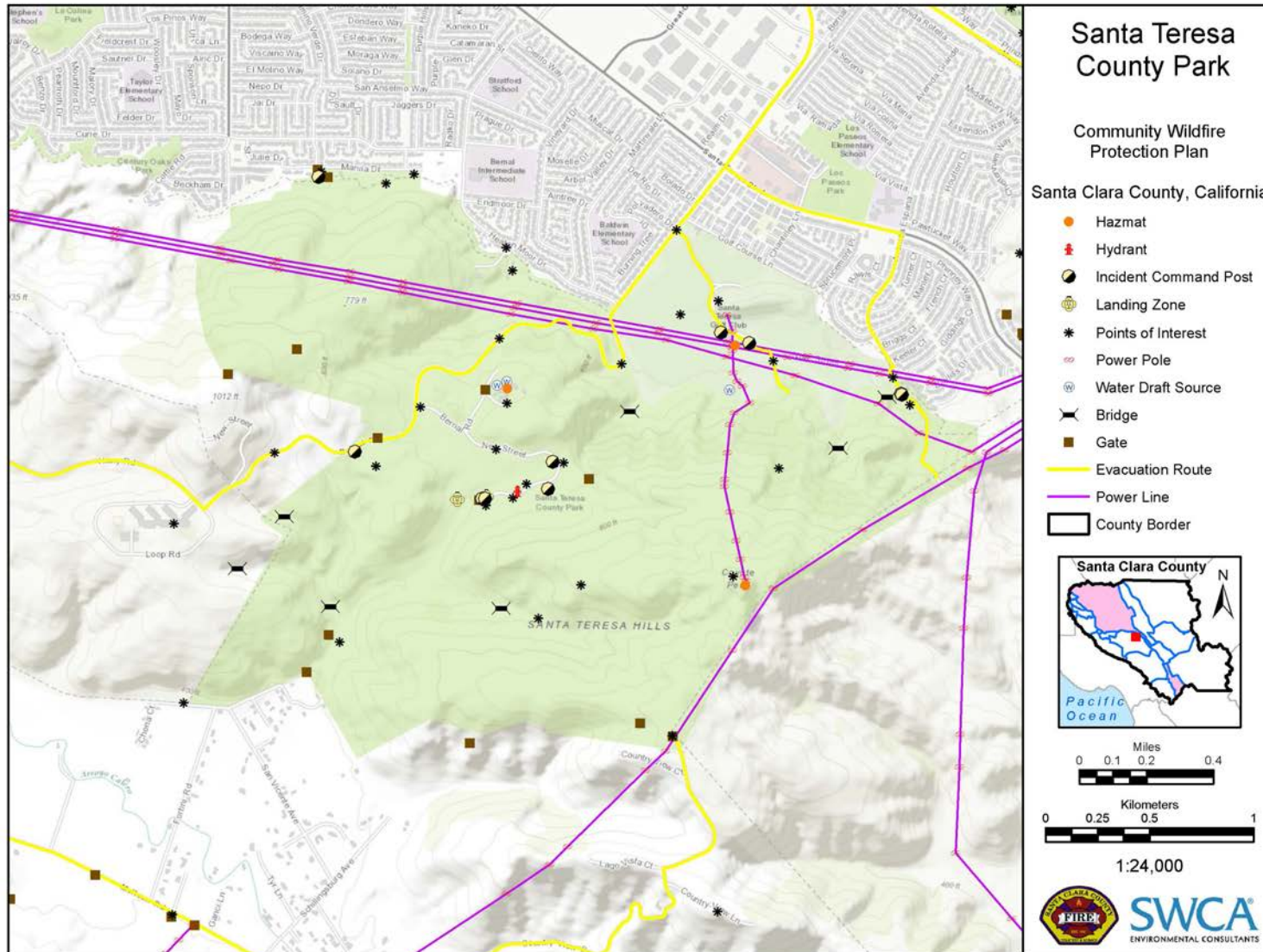


Figure 18.24. Santa Teresa County Park Emergency Management

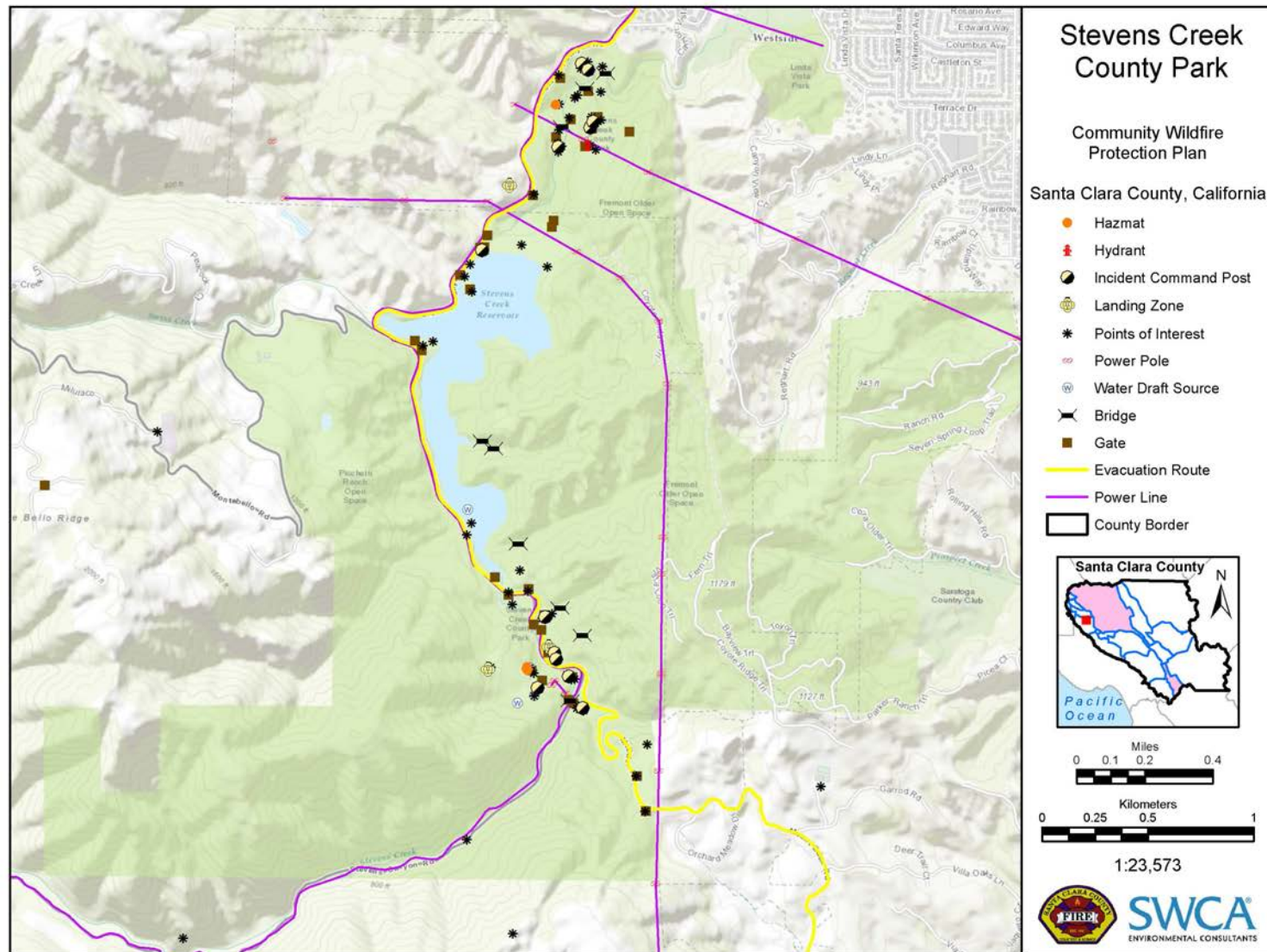


Figure 18.25. Stevens Creek County Park Emergency Management

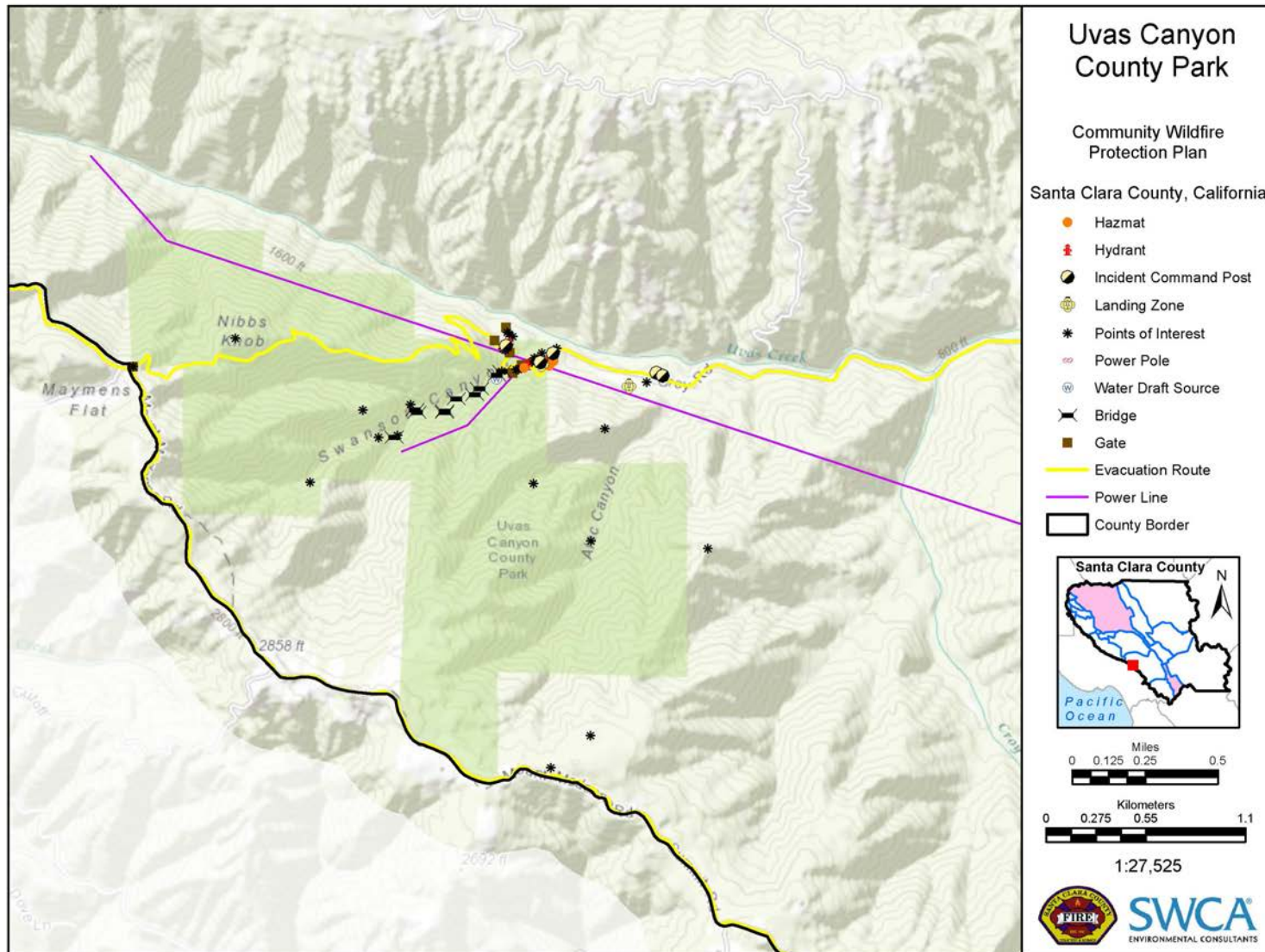


Figure 18.27. Uvas County Park Emergency Management

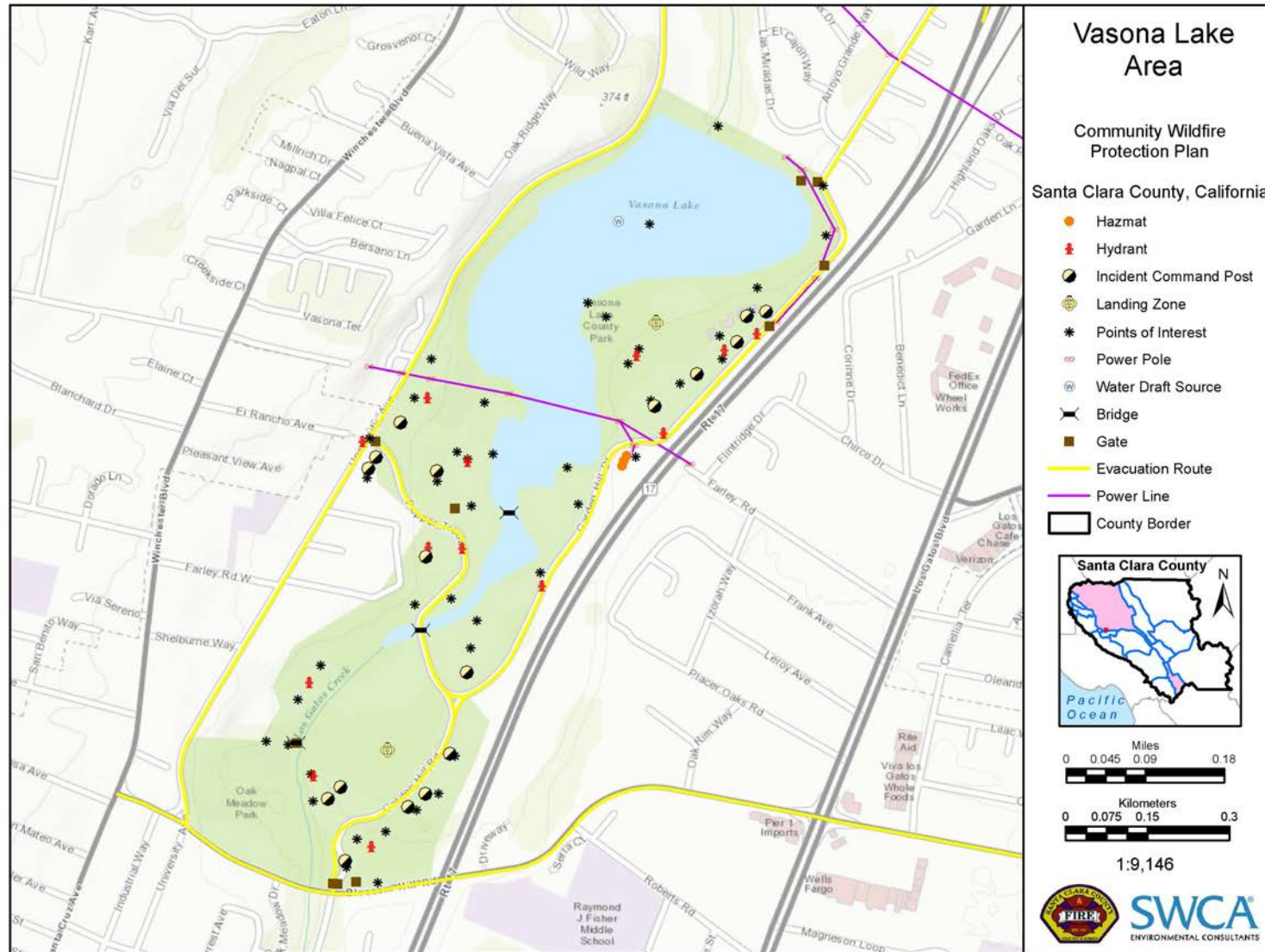


Figure 18.28. Vasona Lake Area Park Emergency Management

Table 18.2. Recommended Fire Prevention Projects on County Parks Lands

ID County Parks	Project Description	Location and Land Ownership	Method	Serves to:	Timeline for Action	Priority (1, 2, 3)	Monitoring	Resources/Funding Sources Available
Non-tiered projects								
County Parks GP1	Provide ArcGIS data layers for Parks Fire and Emergency Response maps for inclusion in CWPP	County Parks	Copy data layers to CWPP geospatial database	Provide information on access and firefighting resources to all fire agencies	Within 1 year	1	Requires annual updating to insure information is current	County Parks
County Parks FC1	Implement defensible space clearing at all Parks facilities	County Parks	Mow and trim vegetation per PRC 4291 requirements; utilize CCC and SJCC crews and County Dept. of Agriculture	Protect life and property	Current practice	1	Annually	County Parks
County Parks FC2	Maintain fire prevention and initial attack capabilities in County Parks	County Parks	Equip ranger patrol trucks and maintenance service trucks with slip-on pumper units; conduct annual fire refresher and CAL FIRE MOU training	Protect life, property, and natural resources	Current practice	1	Annual inspections of slip-on units	County Parks
Strategic goal FC2: Establish safe refuge areas								
County Parks FC2.1	Provide geospatial data for designated safe refuge areas, escape routes, and landing zones within county parks	County Parks	Copy data layers from FERP	Protect lives	Within 1 year	1	Update annually	County Parks
Strategic goal FC15: Large capacity water tanks and hydrants at trailheads								
County Parks FC15.1	Map locations of all hydrants and water tanks within County Parks	County Parks	Provide FERP data layers for hydrants and water sources	Protect life and property	Current practice	2	Requires annual updating	County Parks

*Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
Annex 18 – County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department*

ID County Parks	Project Description	Location and Land Ownership	Method	Serves to:	Timeline for Action	Priority (1, 2, 3)	Monitoring	Resources/Funding Sources Available
Strategic goal EO11- Increase signage/replace or augment existing signage. Use existing signage to spread fire prevention message along highways and in public open space areas (trailheads, info kiosks) to reduce human ignitions.								
County Parks EO11.1	Inform public of fire prevention rules and fire hazard conditions	County Parks	Post “No Smoking” signs at park entrances and trailheads; use Smokey Bear fire prevention signs in County Parks; restrict campfires during Red Flag conditions	Protect life and property	Current practice	2	Periodic	County Parks
Strategic goal EO12: Promote and increase the use of prescribed fire								
County Parks EO12.1	Implement VMP at Grant County Park	CAL FIRE, County Parks	Burn a total of approximately 1,800 acres over a 3-year period	Improve vegetation, protect life and property	Within 3 years	1	Spring biodiversity monitoring annually	CAL FIRE, County Parks
County Parks EO12.2	Coordinate development of a VMP for Motorcycle County Park and adjoining areas on Coyote Ridge	CAL FIRE, OSA, SCVHA, County Parks	Develop a multiagency VMP to control invasive weeds and reduce fire risk on Coyote Ridge	Improve vegetation, protect life and property	Within 3 years	2	Annual monitoring for biodiversity to be conducted	CAL FIRE, OSA, SCVHA, County Parks
Strategic goal FR3: Encourage continued grazing in parks and open space for grass/light fuel maintenance								
County Parks FR3.1	Continue grazing on approximately 11,000 acres of county park lands	County Parks	Continue or renew grazing licenses with private ranchers	Reduce light fuels, improve vegetation	Current practice	1	Annual monitoring for spring biodiversity and residual dry matter	County Parks; local ranchers
County Parks FR3.2	Implement grazing on 700 acres at Santa Teresa County Park	County Parks	Implement grazing license with private rancher	Reduce light fuels, improve vegetation	Within 1 year	1	Annual monitoring for spring biodiversity and residual dry matter	County Parks; local ranchers

*Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
Annex 18 – County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department*

ID County Parks	Project Description	Location and Land Ownership	Method	Serves to:	Timeline for Action	Priority (1, 2, 3)	Monitoring	Resources/Funding Sources Available
Strategic Goal: FR1-Incorporate single track trails into a fire defense system where practical								
County Parks FR1.1	Evaluate ridgetop trails for potential to serve as defensive lines	County Parks	Based on County Parks geospatial data and field surveys, determine which of the 42 miles of ridgetop trails in county parks could serve as effective defensive lines during fires	Protect life and property	Within 2 years	3	Annual inspections required	County Parks
County Parks FR1.2	Mow/brush unpaved roads and single track trails	County Parks; CCC, SJCC, and County Dept. of Agriculture	Use grass mowers, slope mowers, and flail mowers to clear vegetation from trails and unpaved roads; maintain defensible space around day use areas and campgrounds	Provide access, protect lives	Current practice	1	Repeated annually	County Parks