

ANNEX 2. SOUTH SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The South Santa Clara Fire Protection District (SSCFPD) encompasses approximately 320 square miles of unincorporated areas in the southern portion of Santa Clara County, including Coyote Valley, portions of Almaden Valley, Casa Loma, Uvas-Svedal, the Pacheco Pass area, and the unincorporated area directly surrounding the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy. The SSCFPD provides fire and rescue services through a contract with CAL FIRE. The district's southern boundary is the Monterey and San Benito County lines, the western boundary is the Santa Cruz County line, and the northern boundary is the City of San Jose and the Central Fire Protection District boundary.

According to Santa Clara County Local Area Formation Commission, the SCCFPD serves a population of 38,500 spread across 320 square miles (Figure 2.1- Figure 2.2).

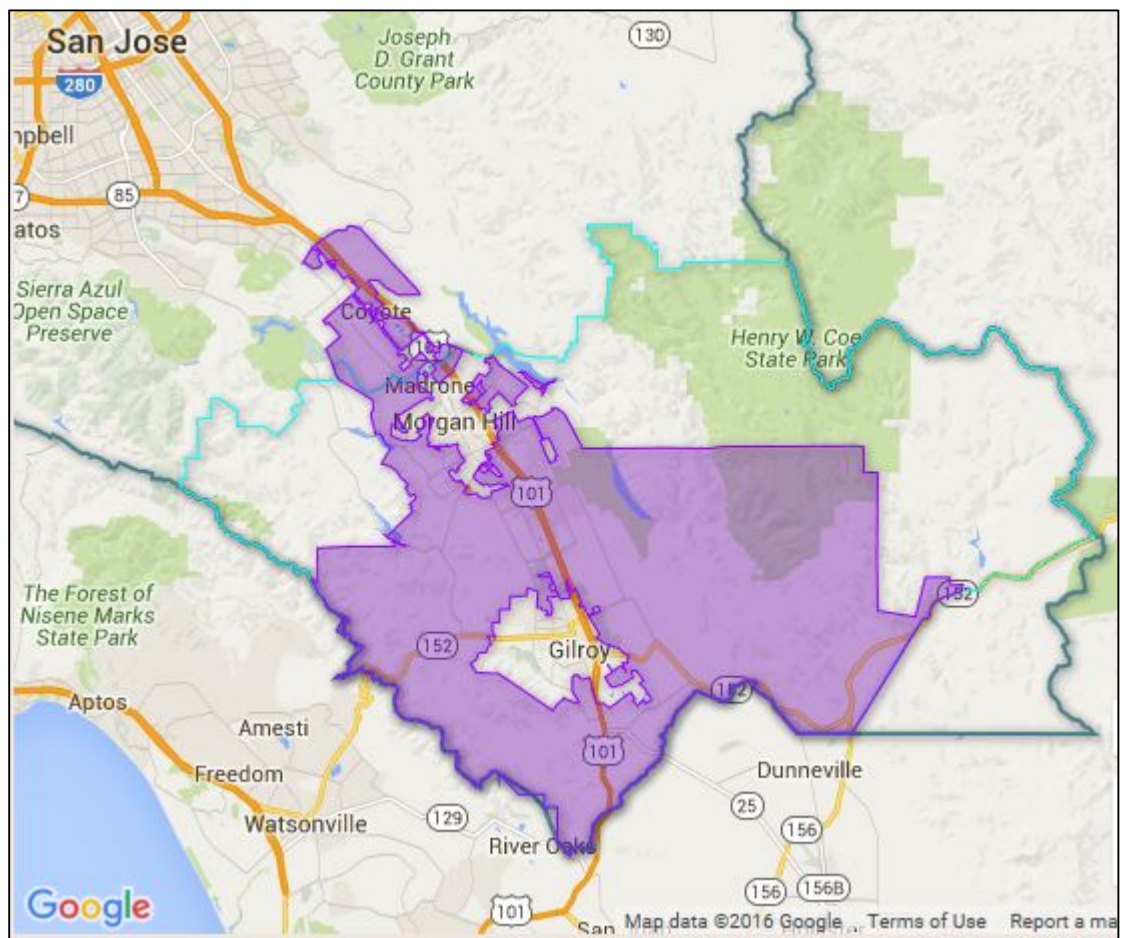


Figure 2.1. SSCFPD boundary and sphere of influence.

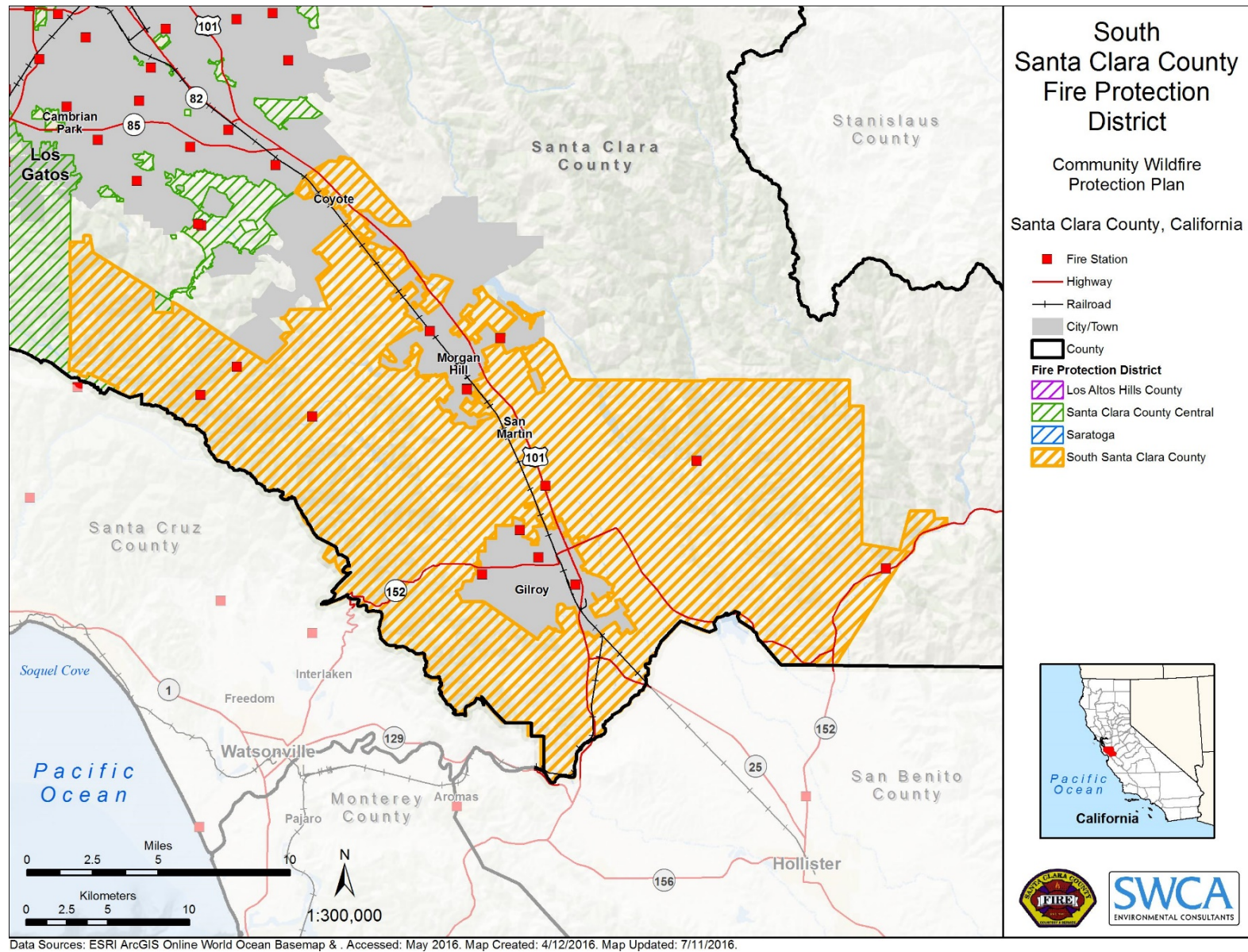


Figure 2.2. South Santa Clara County Fire Protection District.

ORGANIZATION AND JURISDICTION

The SSCFPD is a “dependent” district governed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors with advisory from an appointed Fire Commission Board composed of seven directors from within the district.

The wildland urban interface (WUI) areas inside the district are also designated by state law as State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) for wildland fire purposes. Therefore, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) shares jurisdictional responsibility for fire protection in the SRAs. The Santa Clara Unit of CAL FIRE, with its headquarters in Morgan Hill, is administratively in charge of CAL FIRE operations in Santa Clara County.

PLANNING TEAM PARTICIPATION

The SSCFPD is represented on the core team by CAL FIRE Division Chief Ed Orre. Community members have been engaged through two rounds of workshops held at the Morgan Hill Community Center.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY

Emergency response for SSCFPD is from three district fire stations staffed by CAL FIRE, two volunteer firefighter staffed fire stations, and three CAL FIRE funded fire stations:

- Masten Road Fire Station, 10810 No Name Road, Gilroy
- Treehaven Fire Station, 3050 Hecker Pass Road, Gilroy
- Morgan Hill Fire Station, 15670 Monterey St, Morgan Hill
- Casa Loma Volunteer Fire Department, 28820 Loma Chiquita Rd, Casa Loma
- Uvas Volunteer Fire Department, 5770 Croy Rd, Morgan Hill
- CAL FIRE Pacheco Fire Station, Highway 152
- CAL FIRE Almaden Fire Station, 20255 McKean Road, San Jose
- CAL FIRE, Coyote Fire Station, Canada Road and Hot Springs Road, Gilroy

Additionally, mutual aid fire resources are available from other Santa Clara County fire agencies. CAL FIRE also provides fire officers, fire engines, air tankers, helicopters, and hand crews because the area is primarily an SRA.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The SSCFPD and CAL FIRE recognize and support the national Ready, Set, Go! program for community member preparedness. The SSCFPD/CAL FIRE provide extensive fire preparedness information and outreach activities for the local community. More information can be found on the SSCFPD website: <http://www.sccfpd.com>.

The SSCFPD and CAL FIRE provide representation on the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (<http://www.SCCFireSafe.org>). This organization provides information regarding chipping programs, defensible space mitigation, forest health issues, and much more. The agencies also offer public meetings and forums to support wildfire awareness.

POLICIES, REGULATIONS, ORDINANCES, AND CODES

- The County of Santa Clara currently uses the 2013 California Building Code that includes required building standards for WUI areas.
- The SCCFPD provides Standard Details and Specifications for fire prevention. The SCCFPD and CAL FIRE carry out fire prevention and defensible space inspections in the area. More information on inspections and standards can be obtained from: <http://www.sccfpd.com>.
- **State Law:** The California Public Resources Code (PRC) sections provide standards for development of WUI areas in SRAs outside the city limits. PRC Section 4290 addresses minimum community design standards in designated WUI areas.
- PRC Section 4291 defines and requires compliance with defensible space in SRAs. Several other PRC codes address regulations regarding activities in WUI areas.
- The Santa Clara County Planning Department manages the County General Plan, land use planning, community design, and building permit processes in the unincorporated area. The Santa Clara County Fire Marshal provides new construction plan review and inspection in the SCCFPD.

IDENTIFY CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY VALUES AT RISK

Critical infrastructure is defined as electrical substations and transmission facilities; cellular, television, radio, and telecommunication sites; railroad structures; highway structures; navigation and coordination facilities; and other sites that are crucial to providing and coordinating essential services. Losses are not just the cost of replacing physical facility, but the cost associated with loss of the service, which can be significantly more than the facility costs.

The planning area also includes a large portion of open space including the Coyote Reservoir, Mount Madonna County Park, Uvas County Park, Harvey Bear County Park, and other large land holdings. These areas are valued for their natural resources and sensitive wildlife habitat, as well as recreational values. In addition to public open space, there are a number of private ranches in the planning area that are prioritized for protection.

There are a number of commercial businesses within the WUI area including wineries, golf courses, small farms, and equestrian facilities.

Other Community Values at Risk include life safety, homes and property values, infrastructure, recreation and lifestyle, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and environmental resources.

SUMMARY

The SSCFPD contains multiple neighborhoods listed on the federal and/or California Fire Alliance list of communities at risk from WUI fire in Santa Clara County. Most of the SSCFPD is in SRAs and high and very high fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs). The area has history of large damaging wildland fires.

Significant development is occurring with building of very large homes on medium-sized rural parcels adding to the values at risk. Historical remote small cabin and home neighborhoods like Casa Loma, Uvas Canyon, and New Almaden on remote, narrow, one-lane roads present a dangerous life safety evacuation problem.

Defensible space maintenance, ignition-resistant techniques and building materials, enhanced water supply, and improved access/egress routes are high priorities to mitigate the hazard and risk in the SSCFPD planning area.

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREA DESCRIPTION

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREA DEFINED

The WUI planning areas for the SSCFPD are delineated in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4 below.

For purposes of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), we have divided the South SSCCPD into six WUI planning areas, which are represented in Chapters 1 through 6 of this annex:

1. Casa Loma – Uvas
2. Almaden Valley
3. San Martin
4. Rural Morgan Hill
5. West Gilroy
6. East Gilroy

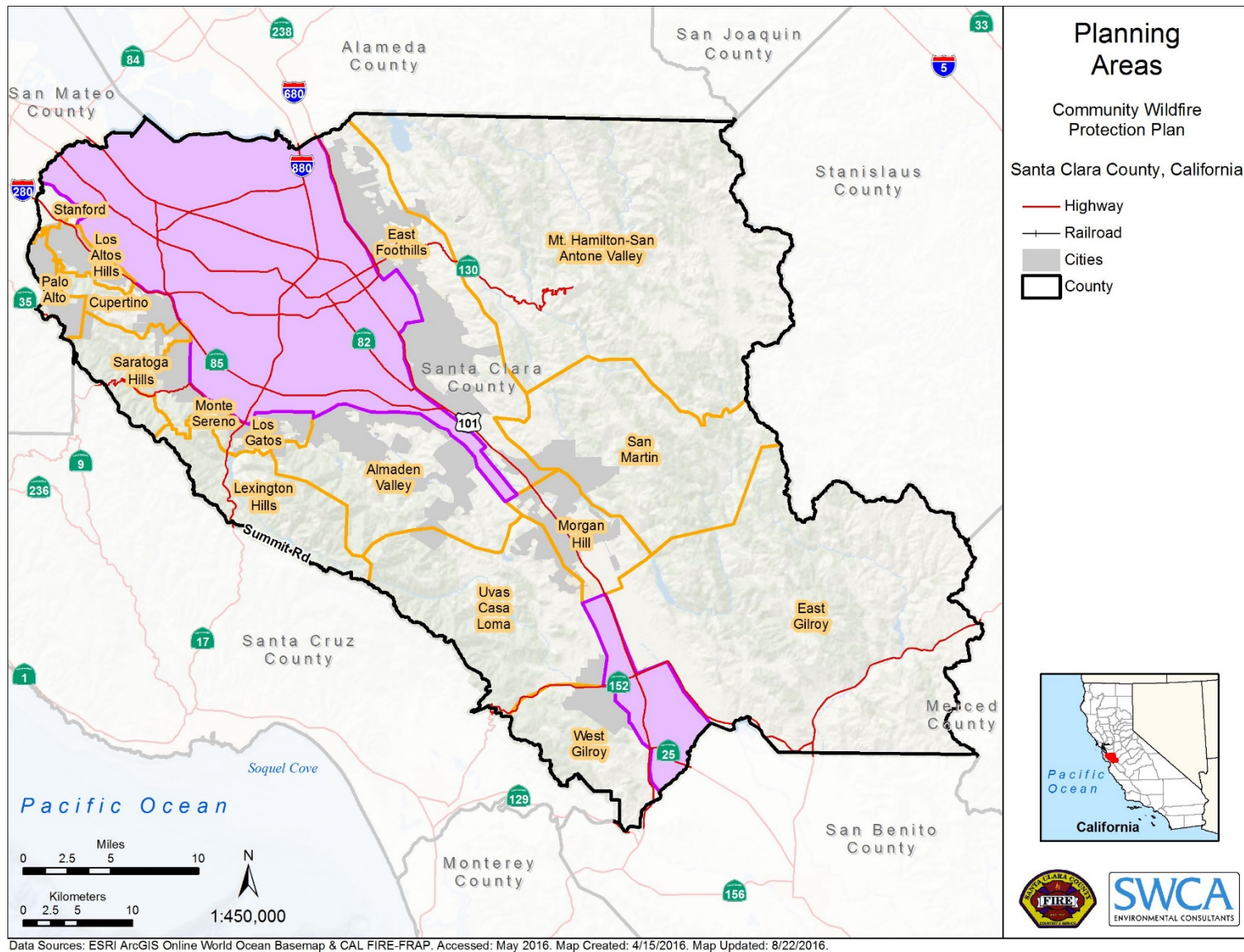


Figure 2.3. SSCFPD WUI planning areas include Uvas-Casa Loma, Almaden Valley, San Martin, Morgan Hill, West Gilroy, and East Gilroy.

FIRE HISTORY

Historically, large wildland fires have occurred within the SSCFPD. Several of these fires were WUI fires that caused extensive damage to developed properties in the district. Additionally, other wildland fires just across the county line in Santa Cruz County created serious threats to the properties within the SSCFPD.

For fire history information, please see Figure 3.2 in the main CWPP document

HAZARDOUS FUEL CHARACTERISTICS

The SSCFPD contains SRAs classified by the state as very high, high, and moderate FHSZs (Figure 2.4). The west side of the SSCFPD is predominantly a very high FHSZ that typically experiences the most damaging WUI fires.

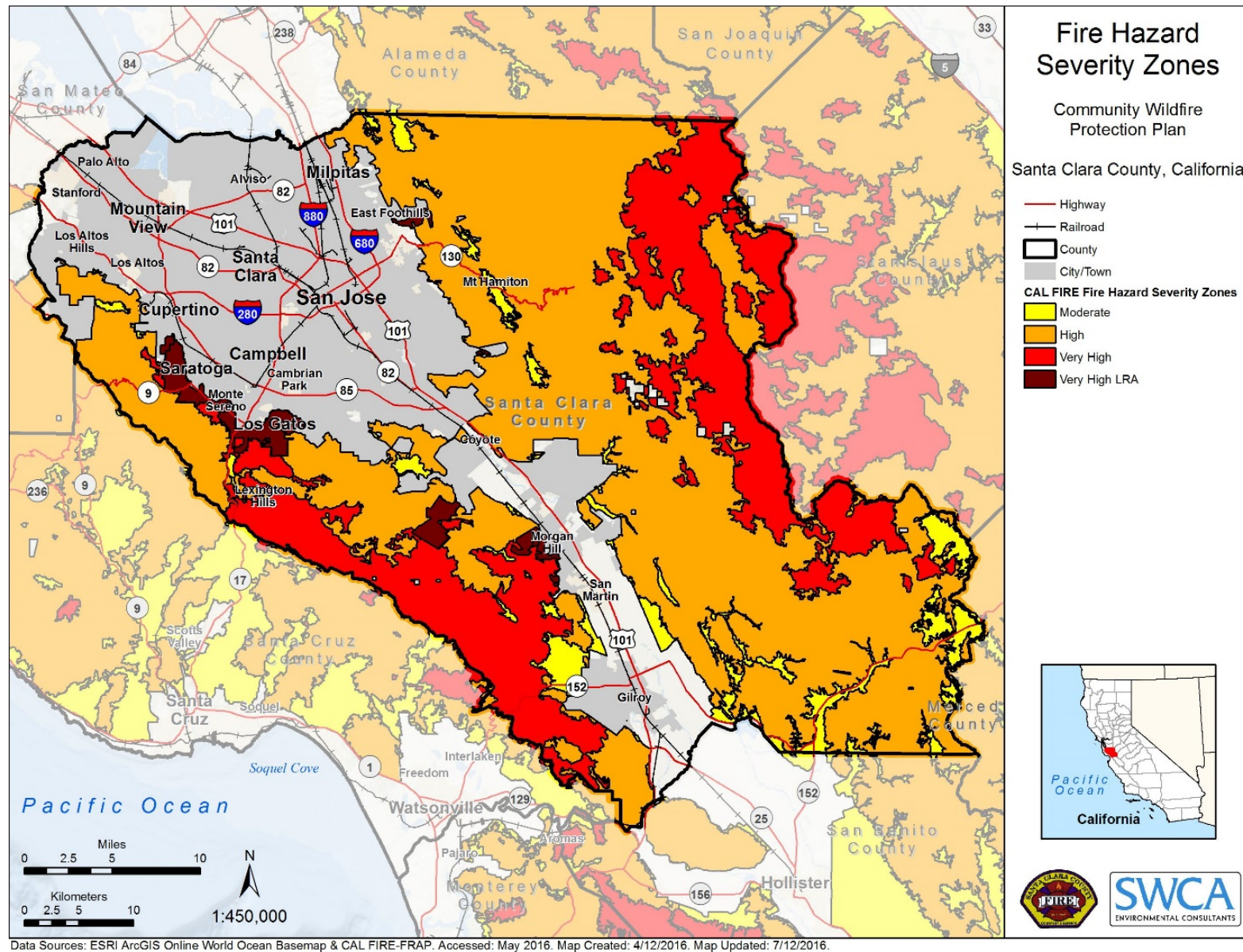


Figure 2.4. Fire hazard severity zones.