

Salinas River Habitat Management Area and adjacent riparian private land

Concept for routing FORTAG paved trail along floodplain in Salinas River Habitat Management Area, and mitigating the associated habitat impact through conservation easement (and possible acquisition) on contiguous private land to the south of the HMA

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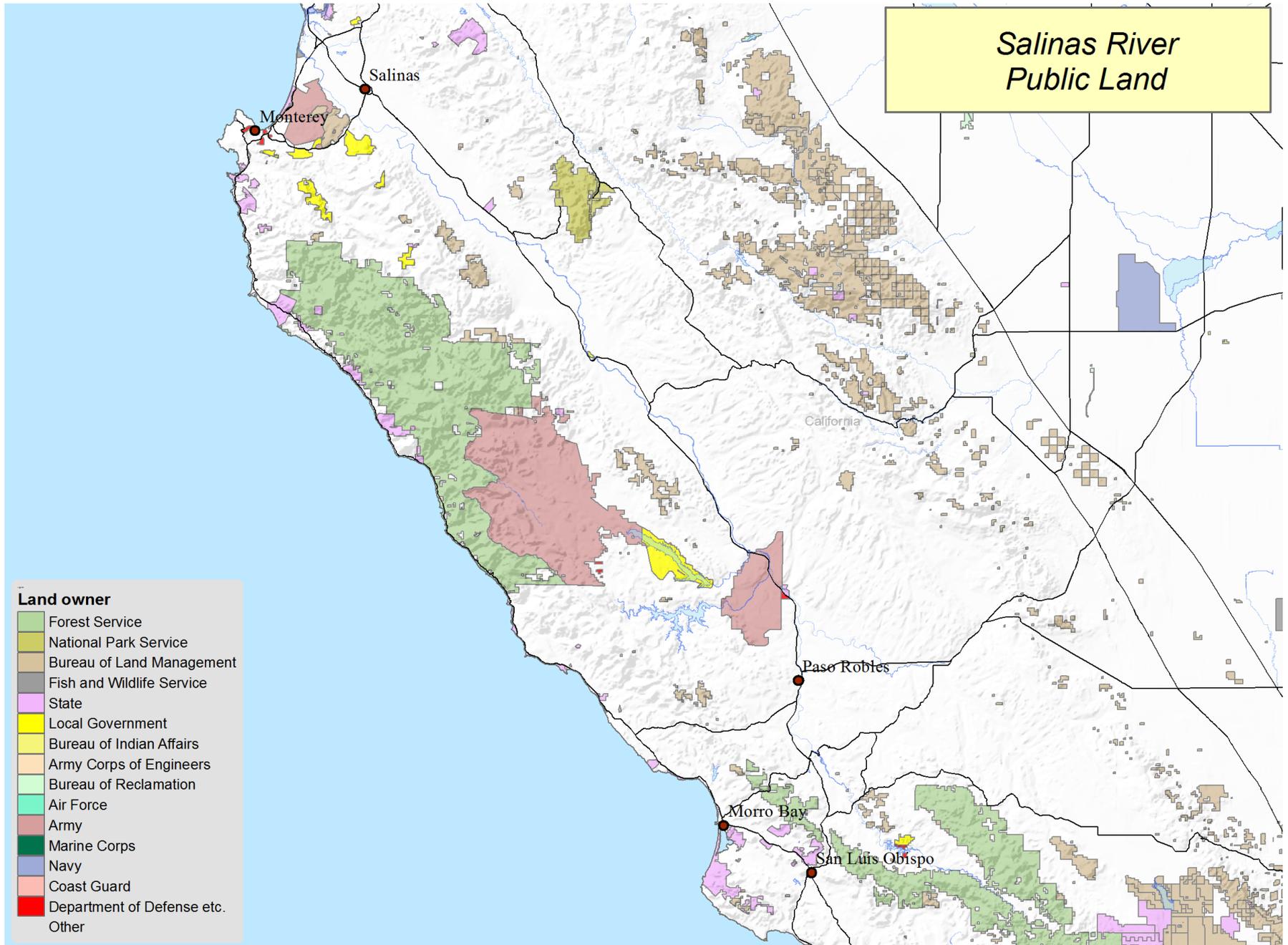
City of Marina public land – Salinas River Habitat Management Area



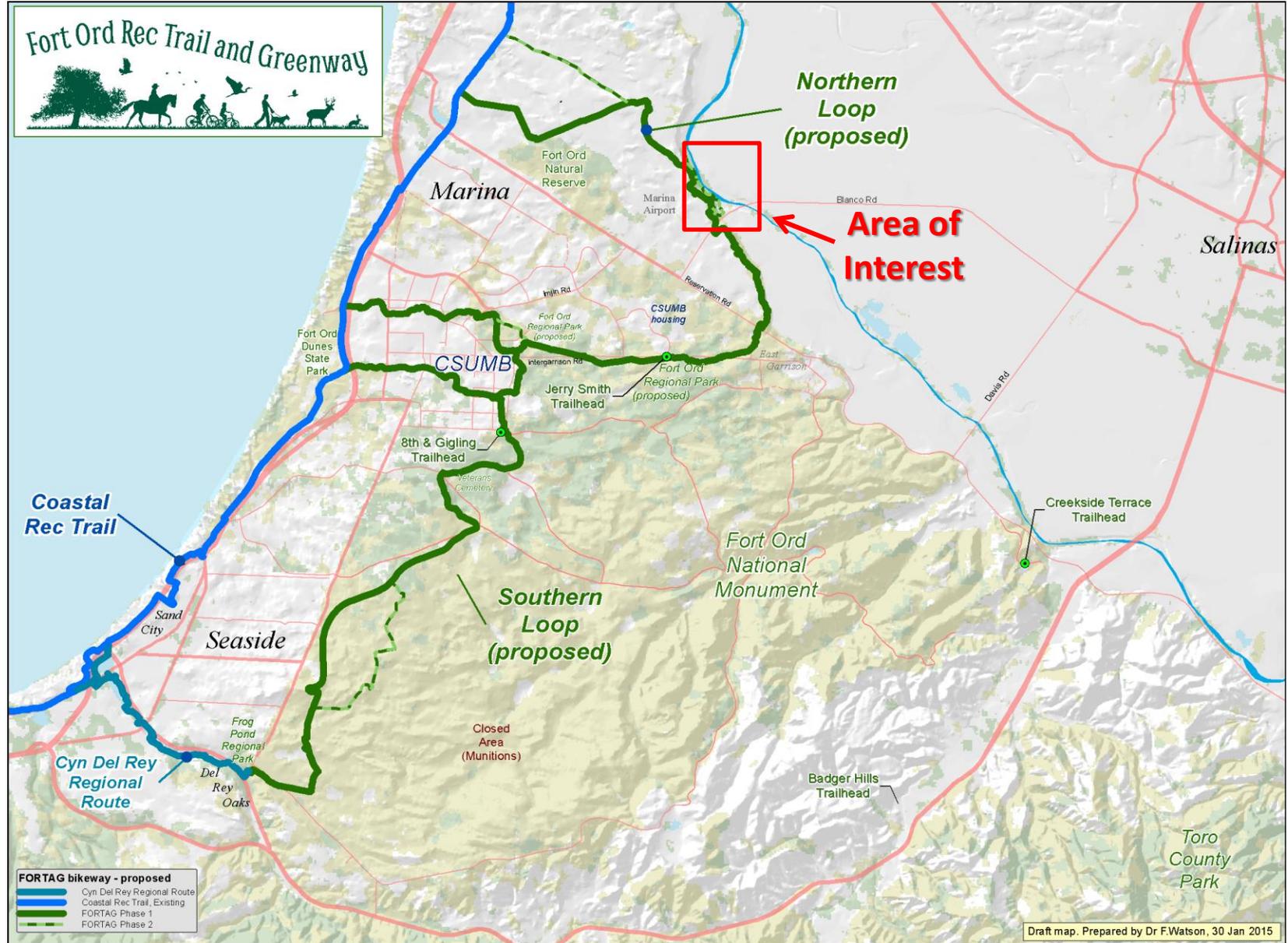
Public land along the Salinas River is very limited

- Salinas River National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS)
 - Located at river mouth
 - 367 acres. Includes both sides of the river
 - No paved access.
 - Lagoon not river; minimal riparian forest
 - Access very difficult in wet season due to muddy road
- Salinas River Habitat Management Area (City of Marina)
 - Located behind Marina Airport
 - 43 acres. Includes both sides of river
 - Substantial cathedral riparian forest & oak woodland
 - ***Has potential to provide the only paved public access to the river downstream of King City***
- Hill Town Ferry State Historic Landmark (Private land)
 - Located just north of Hwy 68
 - About 25 acres, on several parcels of private ag land
 - Commemorates ferry service that ended in 1889
 - Includes both sides of river
- San Lorenzo County Park (Monterey County Park)
 - Located on northern edge of King City
 - 209 acres. Includes both sides of river, and a campground
 - Includes what looks like a **footbridge over the Salinas River constructed solely for the park** in the late 1990s
- Big Sandy Wildlife Area (CDFW)
 - Located either side of Camp Roberts
 - 850 acres, in two distinct parcels separated by about 5 miles
 - Includes both sides of river
 - Apparently managed as a hunting area for wild pigs and quail
- Camp Roberts (US Army)
 - No public access
- Larry Moore Park (City of Paso Robles)
 - Located on southern edge of Paso Robles
 - 21 acres. Includes one side of river
- Salinas River Trail (proposed, Cal Am)
 - Located in the Templeton / Atascadero area
 - May involve public access to river?
- Santa Margarita Lake (San Luis Obispo County Park)
 - Located about 7 miles from Santa Margarita
 - Several thousand acres
- Los Padres National Forest (USFS)
 - Salinas River originates as a creek in LPNF

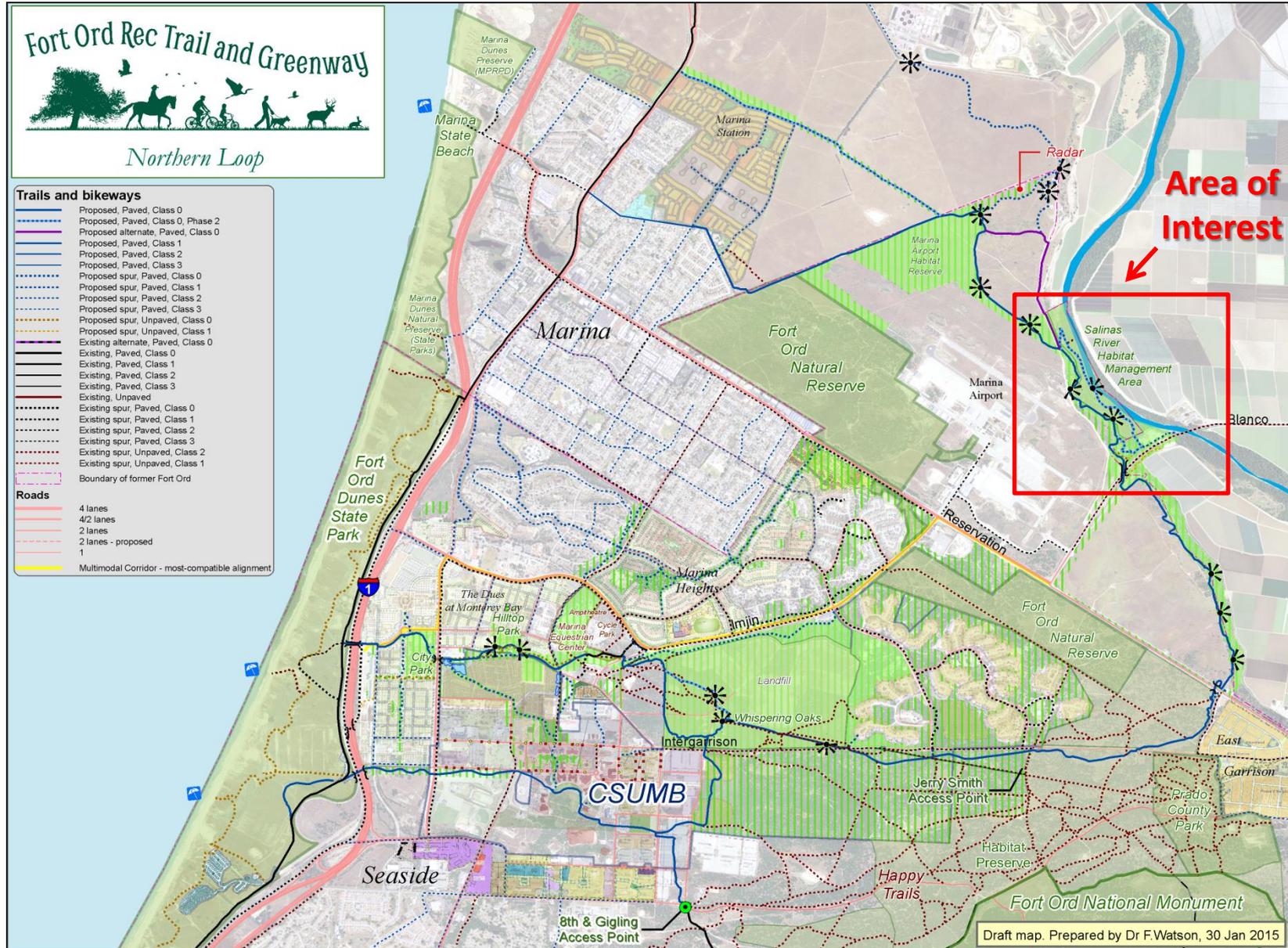
There's not much publicly accessible land along the Salinas River



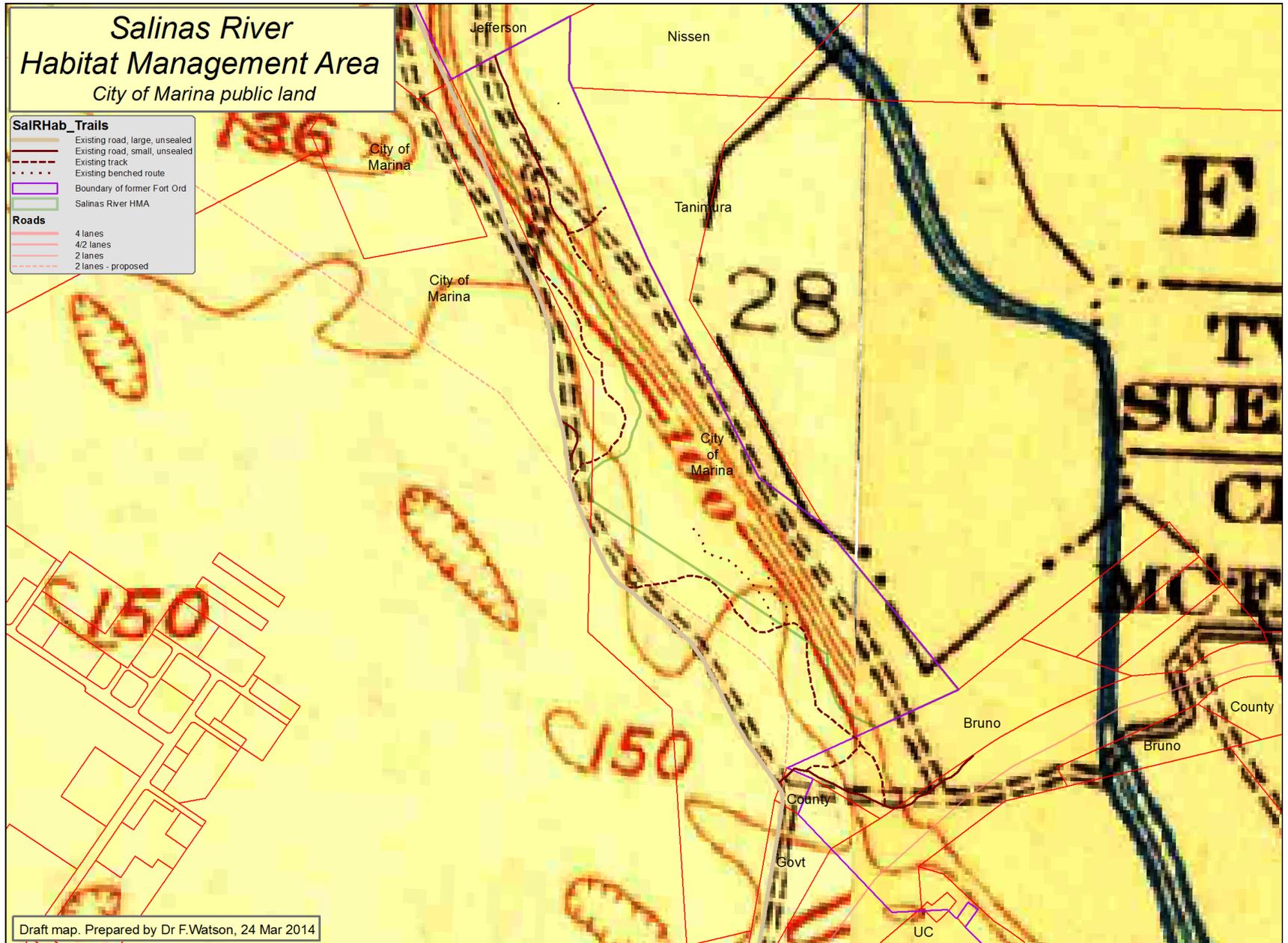
The Fort Ord Rec Trail and Greenway (www.fortag.org) represents (among many other things) one of the only remaining opportunities to provide facilitated public access to the Salinas River downstream of King City



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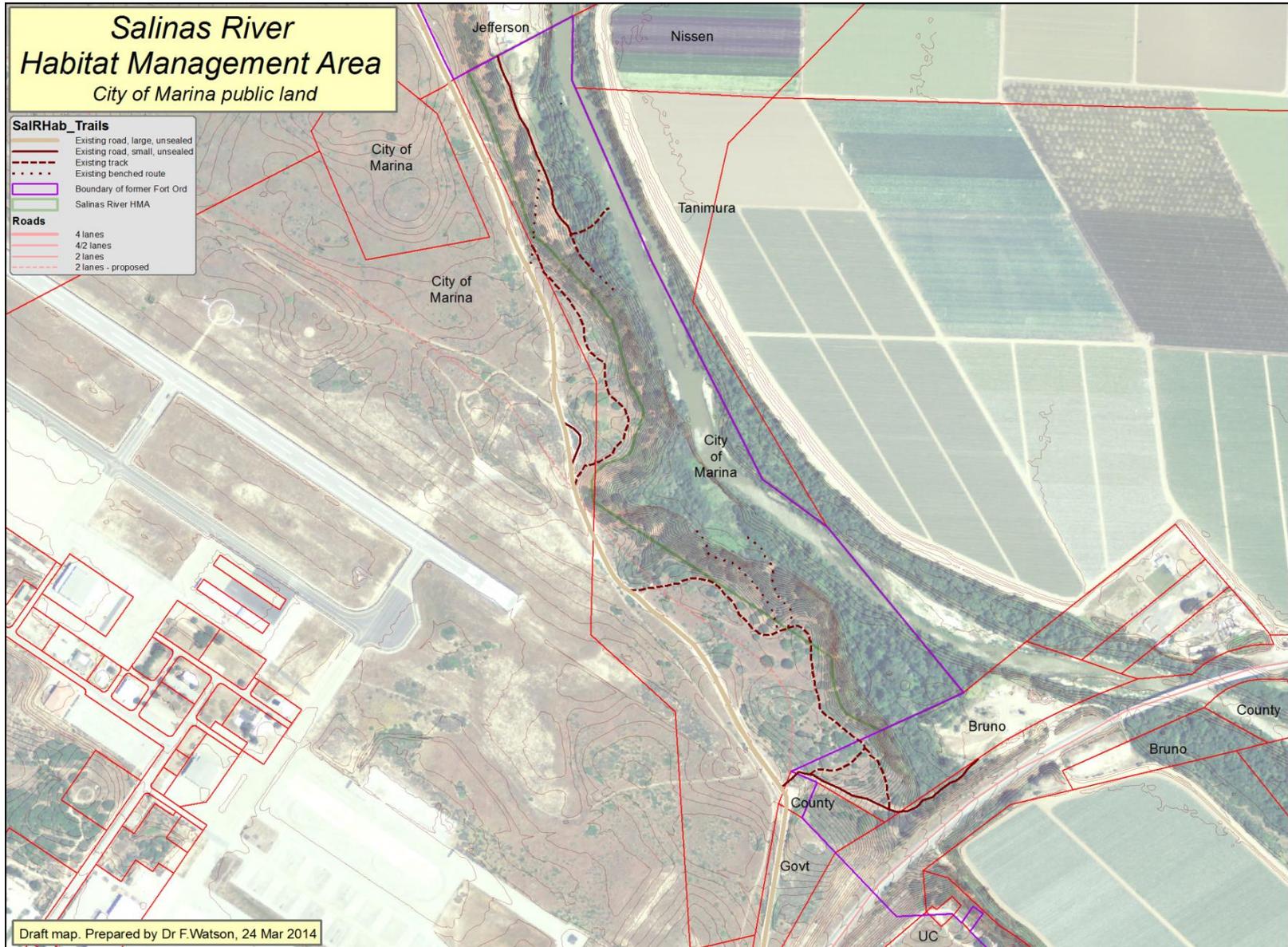
In 1913, the river was further east. There were tracks along both the floodplain and the bluffs above the river, and there were two tracks that descended to the river from the bluffs.



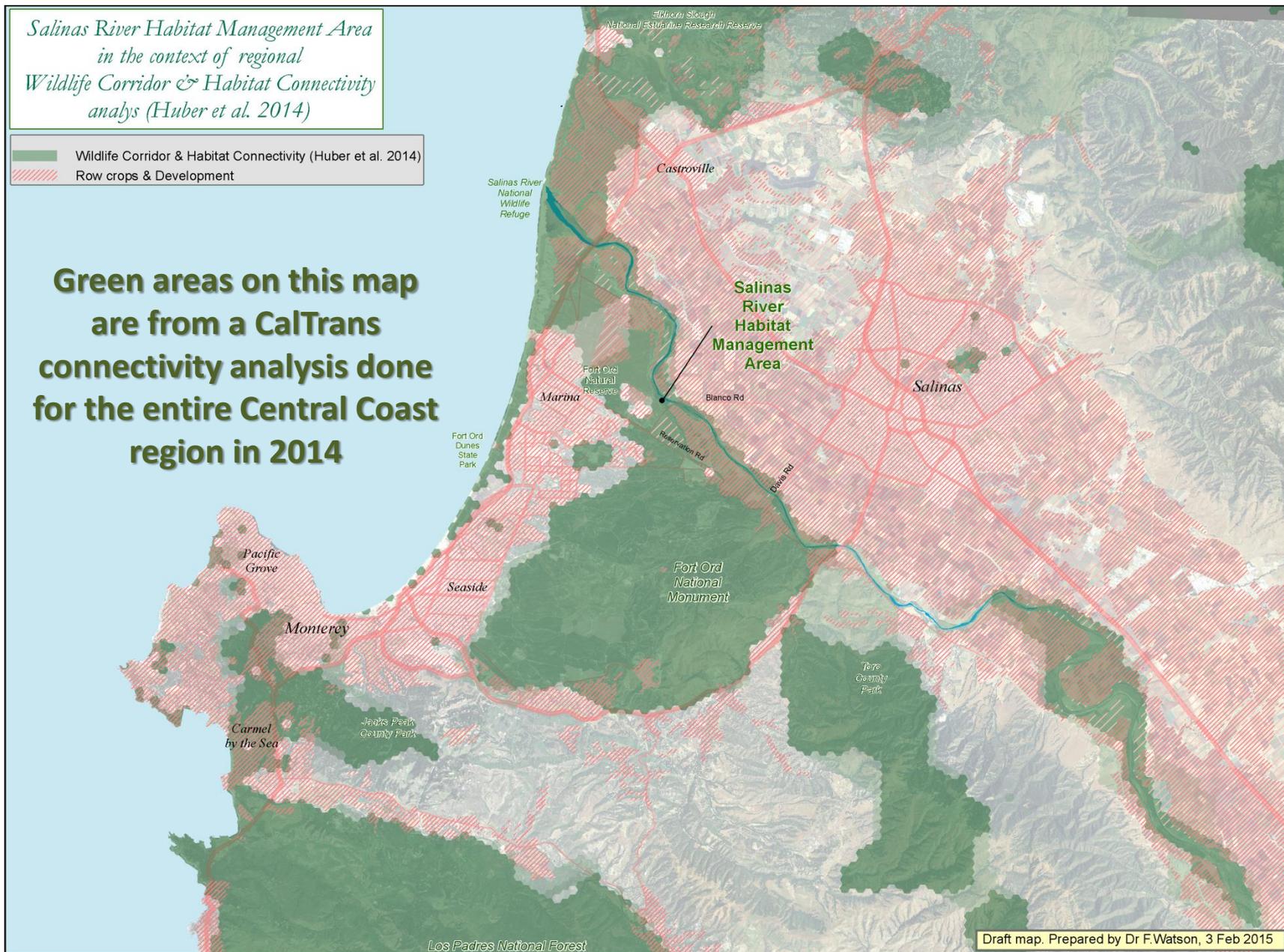
By 1941, the river had moved west to its present location, but an active floodplain persisted to its east. In addition to Blanco Rd, at least three tracks descended to the river from the bluffs. Riparian vegetation was thin in places, probably due to a combination of grazing and military activity.



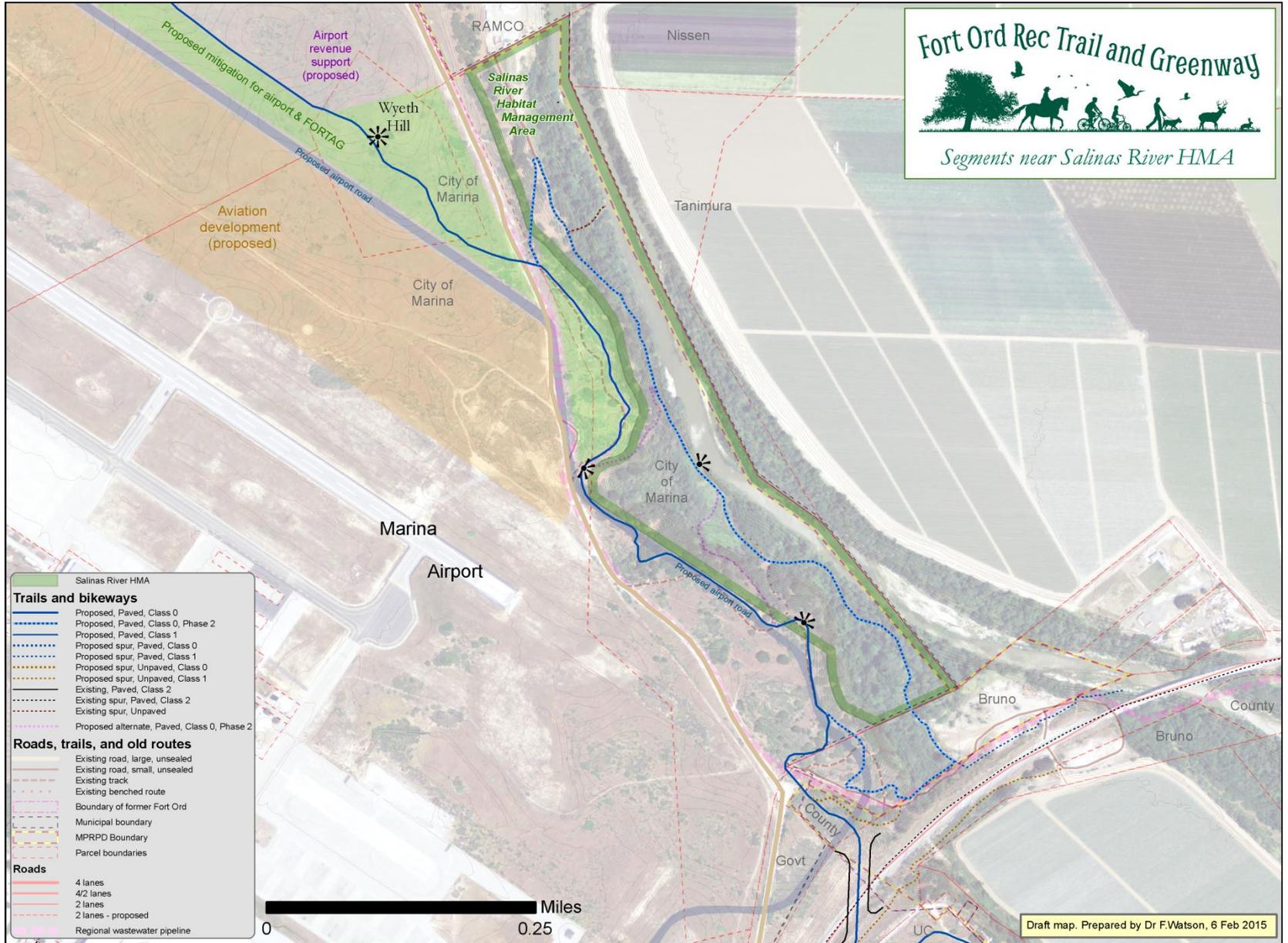
In 2012-2015, the Salinas River HMA parcel contains the river itself, a heavily vegetated riparian floodplain, steep slopes of mature oak, and native shrubs and annual grassland on the bluffs. The three old tracks can still be descended, and one can be penetrated all the way to the river. Old Blanco Rd still exists as a gravel track with a regional wastewater main underneath it, and the new Blanco Rd is adjacent.



This area is one of just two or three major bottlenecks for north-south coastal wildlife habitat connectivity. Protection of additional habitat parcels would facilitate this connectivity.



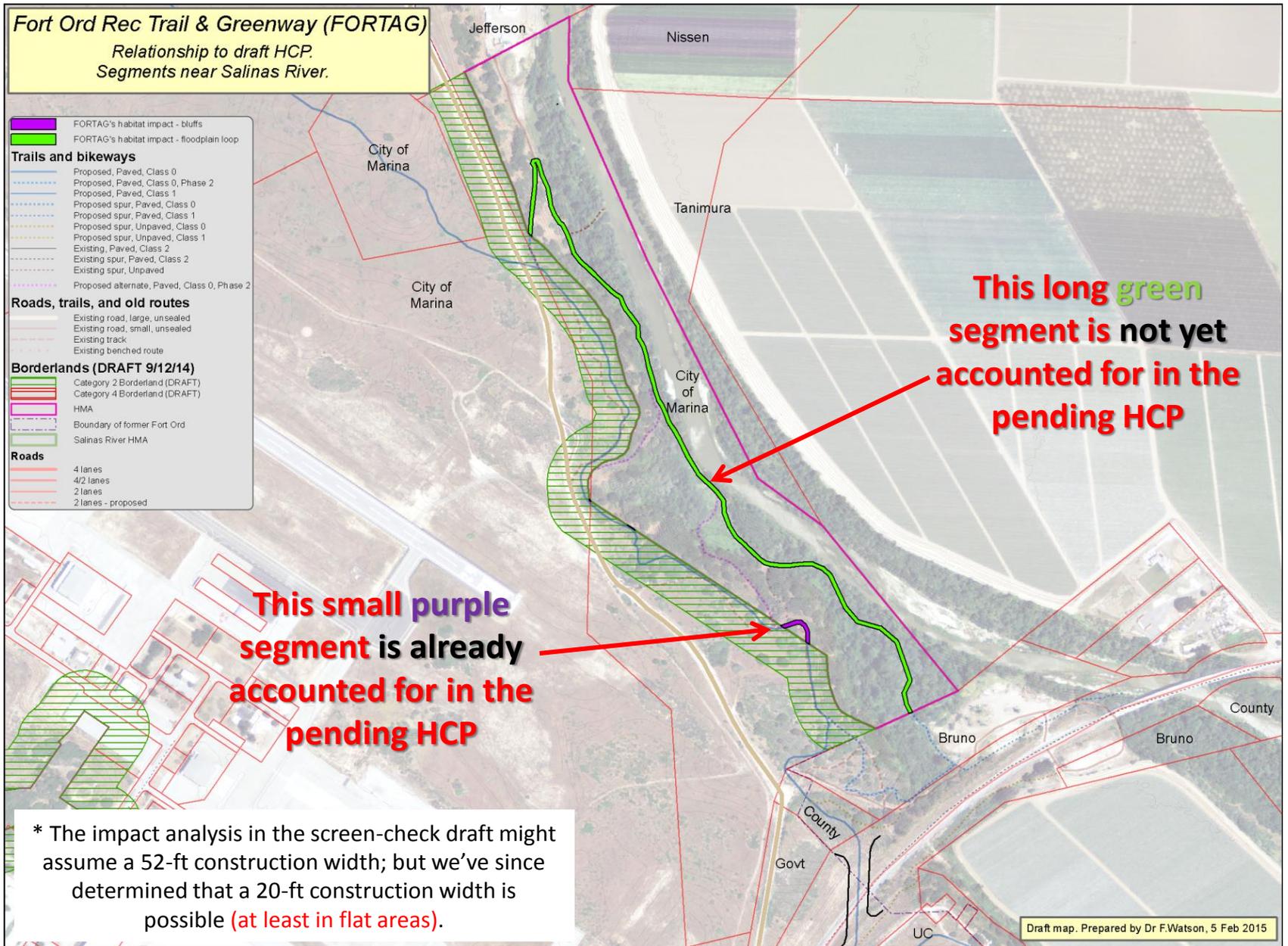
The main FORTAG paved bike trail is proposed to run along the bluffs above the Salinas River.
 A loop is proposed to run along the floodplain below the bluffs, adjacent to the river.
 A trailhead could be created adjacent to the river,
 through either acquisition, easement, or private landowner development.



Approximate travel times to/from the Salinas River trailhead and habitat area

- City of Salinas to (hereby proposed) “Salinas River Trailhead”:
3.7 miles = 5 minutes by car
- Scenic loop around Salinas River floodplain and bluffs:
1.6 miles = 10-30 minutes by bike (includes 110 ft elevation gain)
- Marina housing to Salinas River bluffs via FORTAG:
2 miles = 12 minutes by bike
- Salinas River Trailhead to Coastal Rec Trail north of Marina:
3.2 – 3.8 miles = 20-25 minutes by bike (90% through open space)
- Salinas River Trailhead to Coastal Rec Trail north of Marina:
36.4 miles = 38 minutes by bike (99% through open space)
- Salinas River Trailhead to Happy Trails:
1.7 miles = 10 minutes by bike (90% through open space)
- Open-space loop around Marina via FORTAG:
13.1 miles = Half marathon = 80 minutes by bike
- Open-space loop around Marina and Seaside via FORTAG:
26.2 miles = Full marathon = 3 hours by bike

Mitigation is required for the 20-ft wide construction limit associated with the paved FORTAG trail. The soon-to-be-finalized screen-check draft of the HCP quantifies this impact*, and mitigates for it with additional habitat protection in the grasslands near Marina Airport.



The catch:

The HCP quantification of FORTAG impact to date **only includes the bluff trail, not the floodplain loop.**

Full realization of the opportunity for public access to the Salinas River would require the HCP to include the 20-ft construction impact along about 0.6 miles of floodplain, and mitigation for this (probably) in the form of additional protection of contiguous riparian land.

The **bluff trail** impact on the HMA (assuming 20-ft limit) is 0.10 acres.

The **floodplain loop** impact would add an additional 1.82 acres.

Assuming a 1:1.25 mitigation ratio, HCP allowance for the floodplain loop would require an additional 2.28 acres of land to be put into conservation. This would probably need to be almost all riparian land, contiguous with the Salinas River HMA.

The private parcels adjacent to Blanco Rd represent an ideal opportunity to both facilitate public access and provide the necessary riparian mitigation for the overall habitat impact on the Salinas River HMA.

The (presumably) required 2.28 acres of riparian mitigation land could easily be found in the contiguous private land south of the Salinas River HMA



Highlights

- Connects people to habitat & open-space
- Potential to provide only facilitated public access to Salinas River downstream of King City
- Protects one of the most valuable wildlife and habitat connectivity bottlenecks in the Central Coast region
- Removes eyesore at a gateway to Fort Ord
- Connects Salinas community to Fort Ord via Fort Ord Rec Trail and Greenway (FORTAG)
- By far the largest tract of riparian forest in public land north of the Peninsula (cathedral cottonwoods, spring songbirds, fall colors)
- River wildlife – beaver dam, egrets, steelhead trout, etc.

Constraints

- Requires private land owner agreement
- Requires funding
- Requires FORA agreement
- Requires CDFW/USFWS agreement – the private parcels are outside the former Fort Ord boundary (although they are contiguous with it)
- Requires an organization to own the parcel or easement on it, even if initially acquired by an intermediary like BSLT (options include MPRPD, City of Marina, ...)
- Regional wastewater line runs through parcel
- Road infrastructure suggests expansion of Blanco Rd to two bridges might once have been envisioned
- Trailhead development and river access probably requires USACE and NOAA-NMFS approval
- ...

Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Salinas River HMA	Private land south of SRHMA: 11.48 ac parcel	Private land south of SRHMA: 3.68 ac parcel
City of Marina	Yes	Yes	No
City of Marina – Sphere of Influence	Yes	Yes	No
Unincorporated Monterey County	No	No	Yes
Monterey Pen. Regional Parks Dist.	Yes	Yes	No
Former Fort Ord	Yes	No	No

Wouldn't it be great if this unique piece of our landscape wasn't a storage site for heavy equipment and construction materials?

