



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Department of General Services

COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER • SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93408 • (805) 781-5200  
DUANE P. LEIB, DIRECTOR

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SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA 93408

August 2, 2005

Jennifer Bitting  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
895 Aerovista Place, Suite 101  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

**RE: Acquisition of Property Adjacent to Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park**

Attached is a request for \$19,050. The funds would be used for the acquisition of a minimum of 40 acres of either surplus Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property or private property located south of Santa Margarita Lake. The property noted above is contiguous to Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park.

The proposed acquisition would help protect water quality, sensitive species and habitat, and retain a sizable area in public open space. The project is consistent with the *Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park Master Plan* and the County's *Natural Area Plan*. In addition, acquisition is supported by the County's Park and Recreation Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and numerous civic organizations.

If you need any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me at (805) 781-4089 or via email at [jdileo@co.slo.ca.us](mailto:jdileo@co.slo.ca.us). Thank you for considering this proposal for funding.

JEANETTE DI LEO,  
Parks Planner

cc: Santa Lucia Chapter - Sierra Club, Attn: Andrew Christie, P.O. Box 15755, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

**A Request for Funds**  
**FROM REGIONAL WATER**  
**QUALITY CONTROL BOARD**

*For the Acquisition of*

**PROPERTY**  
**CONTIGUOUS TO**  
**SANTA MARGARITA LAKE**  
**REGIONAL PARK**

**Prepared by:**

**San Luis Obispo County**  
**Parks Division**  
**1087 Santa Rosa Street**  
**San Luis Obispo, CA 93408**  
**(805) 781-5200**

**August 1, 2005**

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The County of San Luis Obispo is requesting \$19,050 for the purchase of a minimum of 40 acres contiguous to Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park. Under this proposal, the County would purchase portions of the acreage indicated in Table 1. Should additional funds be necessary to obtain a minimum of 40 acres, the County would pursue a Habitat Conservation Fund Grant, Proposition 50 Grant Funds (passed in 2002), and/or park bond funding proposed in 2006.

Table 1 Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park Future Acquisitions Adjacent to Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park			
Parcel #	Acres	Current Property Owner	Estimated Value
Parcel 3	107	BLM	\$48,150
Parcel 5	84	BLM	\$37,800
Parcel A	~100	Private Property Owner	Unknown
291			

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

Table 2A represents the scenario where no additional funds are necessary (beyond those obtained from RWQCB). This scenario would occur if Parks can obtain 40 or greater acres for roughly \$19,050. County Parks would be able to purchase the property and then request reimbursement from RWQCB. No funds are requested prior to acquisition. Please note, if the County is able to purchase Parcel A this process would likely be the quickest. Purchasing BLM property is a more lengthy process.

Table 2B is the timeline if additional funding must be obtained by the County. Please note, although County Parks has been very successful in obtaining grants, the process of applying and waiting for notification adds time. Often grant applications are only accepted during certain times of the year. For example, grant applications for the Habitat Conservation Fund may only be submitted in October. If an agency is successful, notification and award of the grant may take six months to a year. Once notification occurs, contracts must be signed and taken to the County Board of Supervisors as well as the granting agency's review body.

Table 2A Estimated Acquisition Timeline No Additional Funds Necessary					
Task	2005	2006		2007	
	Sept -Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.
Complete Contract with RWQCB	X				
Negotiations with Property Owner		X	X		
Purchase Property				X	
Board of Supervisors Acceptance					X

Table 2A Estimated Acquisition Timeline Additional Funds Necessary									
Task	2005	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Sept - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.	Jan. - June	July - Dec.
Form Contract with RWQCB	X								
Start Negotiations		X	X	X					
Obtain Additional \$ to complete Acquisition	X	X	X	X					
Purchase Property							X	X	
Board of Supervisors Acceptance									X

**GENERAL BACKGROUND**

Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park is located on the upper Salinas River, approximately eight miles east of the town of Santa Margarita. As noted in Table 3, the regional park includes 7,015 acres of recreation and open space land.

Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park has been operated by San Luis Obispo County Parks Division as a regional park since the 1950s. Santa Margarita Lake provides drinking water for the City of San Luis Obispo while also providing recreational area. Recreational opportunities provided at the park include boating, fishing, camping, group and individual picnic areas, a children's play area (including play equipment), nature study, swimming (within a swimming pool), and approximately 35 linear miles of trails.

The lake and its surrounding terrain are picturesque, consisting of rugged, diverse topographic features, lush vegetation, and a pastoral landscape. Oak and pine woodlands, chaparral, riparian woodlands and grasslands surround Santa Margarita Lake. Views

Table 3 Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park Existing Acreage Managed by SLO County Parks August 2005		
Land Owner	Acres	Current/Proposed Use
<b>ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS</b>		
Land Area	4,461	Leased by SLO County for recreation and natural resource protection.
Santa Margarita Lake (Surface Area)	790	Leased by SLO County for recreation and water source City of San Luis Obispo.
<b>SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY</b>		
Parcel 1	1,280	Previously owned by the BLM. The County purchased this area in 2003 through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.
Parcel 2	191	Owned by the BLM. Property is currently being purchased by SLO County with a Habitat Conservation Fund Grant. The acquisition should be complete by December 2005.
Parcel 4	197	
APN 070-391-009	96	County purchased from private property owner in 1990s.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,015</b>	

across the lake are generally unscreened and scenic. Topography directly north and south of the lake consist of rolling hills, canyons and streams with scattered rock outcroppings. Topography east and west of the lake consist of the Salinas River's drainage basin and rolling hills.

Within the park, recreational uses are primarily near the southwestern portion of the lake. The majority of the park is open space. As a result, Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park provides habitat for numerous plant and animal species including mountain lion and black bear habitat, creek corridors and riparian habitat, and native Grey Pine and Coast Live Oak woodlands. Sensitive species onsite include peregrine falcon, the American badger, raptors, mountain lion, and bats. Other species found on the site include black bear, bobcats, wild turkey, deer, racoon, and squirrels.

**BLM ACQUISITION BACKGROUND**

Prior to the year 2000, County Parks managed roughly 1,800 acres of BLM land surrounding Santa Margarita Lake as part of Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park. In the late 1990s, the BLM contacted County Parks indicating they would attempt to sell the 1,859 acres contiguous to Santa Margarita Lake Park. The BLM offered SLO County the first right of refusal. Since that time, County Parks has been attempting to obtain this surplus BLM property. As of December 2005, the County will have obtained 1,668 acres of the 1,859 acres.

In September 2000, SLO County completed a contract with State Parks for grant funds totaling \$175,000. The Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) Grant would purchase what the County designates as Parcels 2 and 4 located south of Santa Margarita Lake (see attached maps). These parcels comprise roughly 388 acres of BLM land. This acquisition should be complete by December 2005.

In December 2000, the County applied for acquisition of BLM land under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RPPA). Under the RPPA grant, the County proposed acquiring 1,280 acres north of Santa Margarita Lake in exchange for developing a trail system and primitive camping on the acreage.

Under the RPPA, the County prepared a biological and archaeological study, prepared a trails plan for the 1,280 acre site, and conducted a survey. After a fairly lengthy process, the BLM issued a patent for the 1,280 acres of BLM property in November 2003. On December 16, 2003, the County Board of Supervisors formally accepted the 1,280 acres.

Table 3 Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park Previous and Current BLM Holdings		
Map Designation	Acres	Status
Parcel 1	1,280	Previously owned by the BLM. The County purchased this area in 2003 through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.
Parcel 2	191	Owned by the BLM. Property is currently being purchased by SLO County with a Habitat Conservation Fund Grant. The acquisition should be complete by December 2005.
Parcel 3	107	Area County is considering purchasing when funds are available.
Parcel 4	197	Owned by the BLM. Property is currently being purchased by SLO County with a Habitat Conservation Fund Grant. The acquisition should be complete by December 2005.
Parcel 5	84	Area County is considering purchasing when funds are available.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,859</b>	

## WHY THE PROJECT SHOULD BE FUNDED

San Luis Obispo County Parks Division has extensive experience managing public lands. The County, through its Parks Division, manages 13,100 acres of parkland and natural areas. Included in these areas are 5 staging areas and approximately 100 miles of trails. Of the total acreage managed by the Division, 8,863 acres are classified as Natural Areas (wildlife areas). The Natural Area associated with Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park consists of over 6,000 acres.

Maintaining the entire acreage, roughly 7,306 acres, as Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park would provide:

- ✓ Reduced erosion from upland areas. The surplus BLM land and Parcel A are located on upland areas that are highly subject to erosion. New rural development on this steep terrain, including new roads and building pads, would potentially impact Santa Margarita Lake, the City of San Luis Obispo's water source. By preserving these sites as open space, concerns regarding erosion are ameliorated.
- ✓ Protection of four seasonal creeks and their riparian corridor as well as a wetland. Wetlands provide a variety of ecological functions and are essential habitat for more than half the plant and animal species listed as threatened or endangered by the state. Within California approximately 90% of historic wetlands have been converted to non-wetland uses. The proposed project would protect and enhance four creek corridors that run through the project site. In addition, Parcel A contains a sizable wetland that would be preserved.
- ✓ A contiguous area in public ownership. Acquisition of all the property shown in Table 3 would preserve 1,859 acres as permanent open space and habitat area. In addition, Los Padres National Forest land (La Panza Range and the Santa Lucia Wilderness) is located north, east, and south of Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park.<sup>1</sup> The proximity of U.S. Forest Service land increases the habitat value of the park.
- ✓ A protected area for mountain lion and black bear habitat. Both mountain lion and black bear inhabit portions of the park. At least one male and multiple female mountain lions are known to use the park as part of their territory. An adult mountain lion's territory varies from 31 to 243 square kilometers in winter-spring and from 106 to 293 square kilometers in summer-fall. An adult male black bear has a territory that averages 505 hectares; and adult female has an average territory of 235 hectares. It is estimated that within the United States there are roughly 16,000 cougars and 170,000 black bear remaining. Novak notes the population of black bear in the western conterminous U.S. has declined substantially. As urban and more rural development occur throughout the U.S., these animals' natural habitat is slowly being eradicated. With acquisition of the BLM property and Parcel A, 7,306 acres of contiguous public land would be protected as open space. This open space area, in addition to nearby Forest Service land, will help sustain mountain lion and bear habitat in San Luis Obispo County.

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<sup>1</sup> Forest Service land basically surrounds the park on three sides, and is located between 2 and 4 miles from the perimeter of Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park.

- ✓ A natural area for sensitive habitats and plant and animal species. The site contains California Live Oak, Grey Pine, riparian areas, raptors, bald eagle, golden eagle, the American badger, and peregrine falcon. Live Oak woodlands are being impacted state-wide.
- ✓ Needed timing. If the County cannot obtain funding, the BLM has indicated they will attempt to sell the property to private interests.
- ✓ Preservation of a scenic resource within San Luis Obispo County. Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park comprises a truly aesthetic area comprised of rolling hills, sandstone peaks, and oak and pine woodlands. Preservation of this area is consistent with State and local plans.
- ✓ A land acquisition consistent with local plans and community desires. The project is supported by the San Luis Obispo Trails Committee, the San Luis Obispo Parks, Open Space and Trails Foundation (SLOPOST), local equestrian groups, the San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation Commission, the County Board of Supervisors, and various other local groups and organizations.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

*Person with day to day responsibilities:*

Jan Di Leo, Parks Planner  
Department of General Services  
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San Luis Obispo, CA 93408  
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San Luis Obispo, CA 93408  
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*General Services Department Head:*

Duane Leib, General Services Director  
Department of General Services  
1087 Santa Rosa Street  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408  
(805) 781-5200



**ATTACHMENTS  
PARCEL DATA & MATCH**

Table A-1 provides a summary of the parcels the County is attempting to acquire at this time. Funds are needed for the acquisition of Parcels 3, 5, and A.

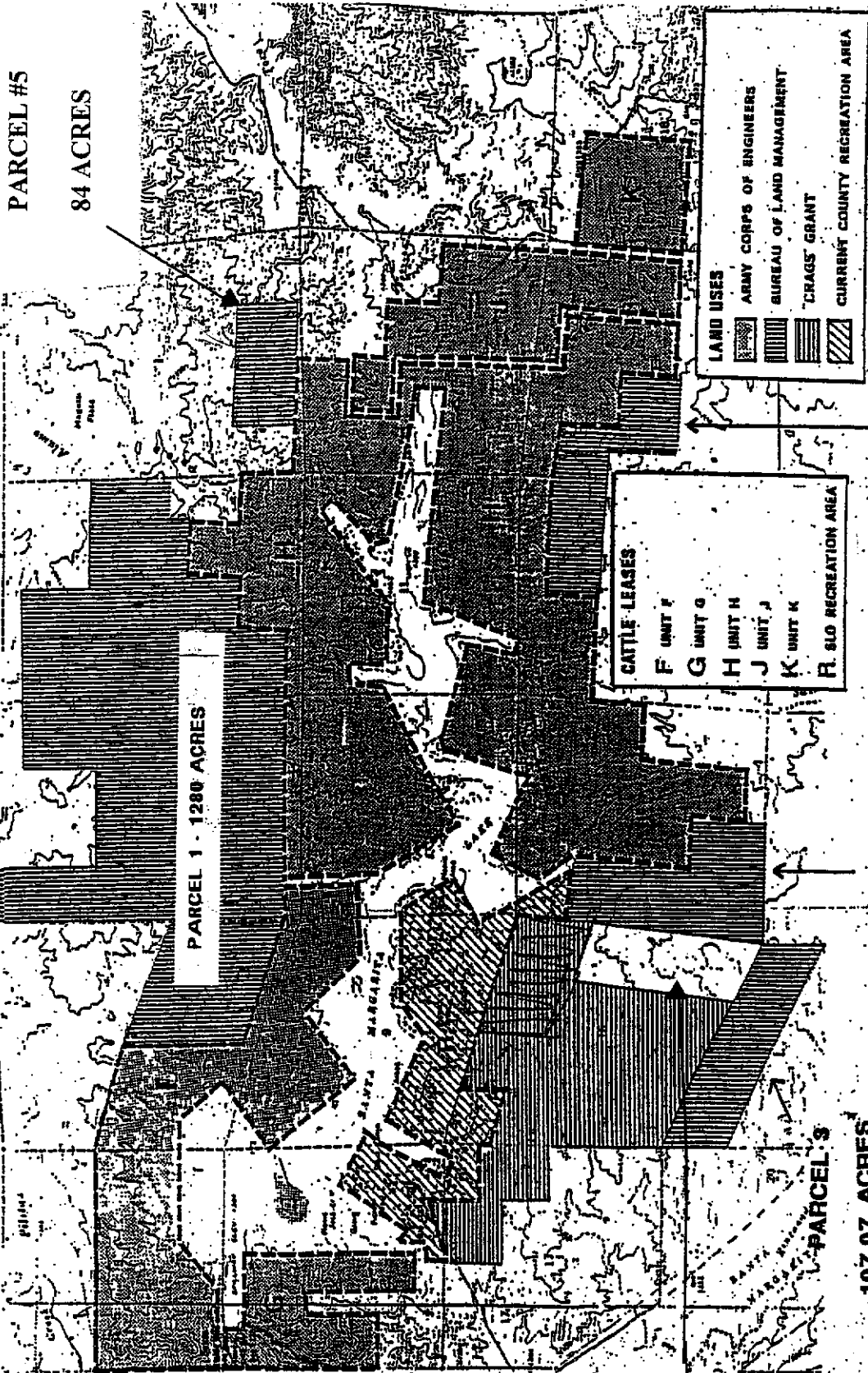
<b>Table A-1 Parcels Proposed for Acquisition August 2005</b>					
<b>Assessor Parcel Number</b>	<b>Map Designation</b>	<b>Property to be Acquired</b>			
		<b>Estimated Acres</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>	
070-431-006	Parcel #3	107	\$48,150	Habitat Conservation Fund Grant, RWQCB, Proposition 50 (2002 CA Bond Act), and/or Bond Act anticipated in 2006	
070-361-008	Parcel #5	84	\$37,800		
070-401-011	Parcel A*	125	Unknown		
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>--</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>

**Notes:** \*The owner of Parcel A is a willing seller.

**SANTA MARGARITA LAKE VICINITY MAP**

Attached is a map depicting Santa Margarita Lake Regional Park and the adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The County has purchased the area designated Parcel 1 (1,280 acres). It is anticipated acquisition of Parcels 2 and 4 should be complete by December 2005.

**SANTA MARGARITA LAKE REGIONAL PARK  
PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**



**PARCEL #5  
84 ACRES**

**PARCEL 1 - 1280 ACRES**

**CATTLE LEASES**  
 F UNIT F  
 G UNIT G  
 H UNIT H  
 J UNIT J  
 K UNIT K  
 F. SLO RECREATION AREA

**LAND USES**  
 [Hatching Pattern] ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
 [Hatching Pattern] BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
 [Hatching Pattern] CRAGS' GRANT  
 [Hatching Pattern] CURRENT COUNTY RECREATION AREA

**PARCEL A  
125 ACRES**

**107.07 ACRES**

**PARCEL 2  
190.97 ACRES**

**PARCEL 4  
197.89 ACRES**

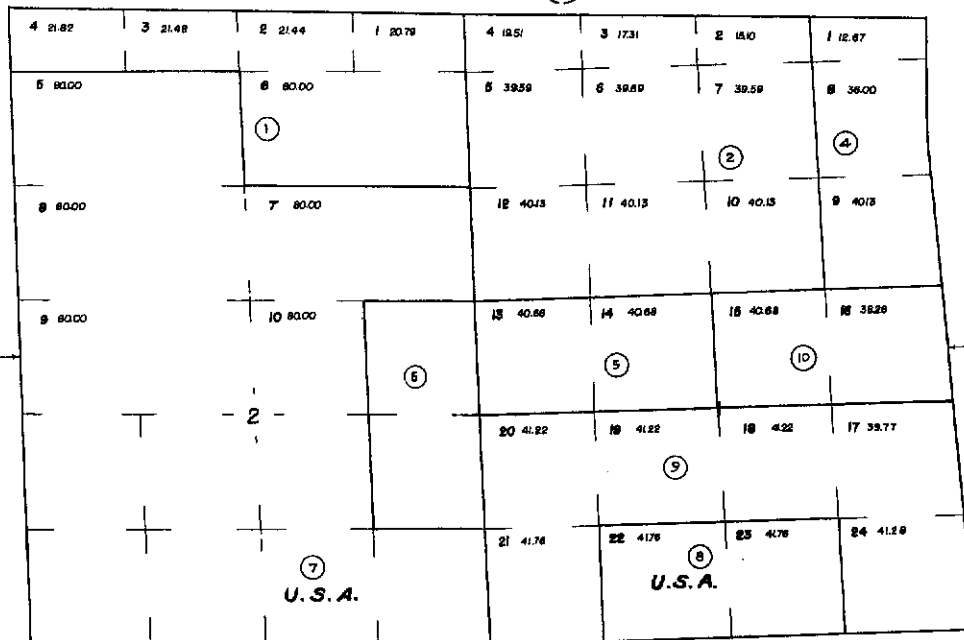
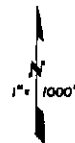
**ASSESSOR PARCEL PAGES  
FOR PROPOSED PROPERTIES**

70-36

SEC'S. 1&2, T30S, R.14E., M.D.M.

233

THIS MAP IS PREPARED FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY



35

20

28 1/2

28 1/2

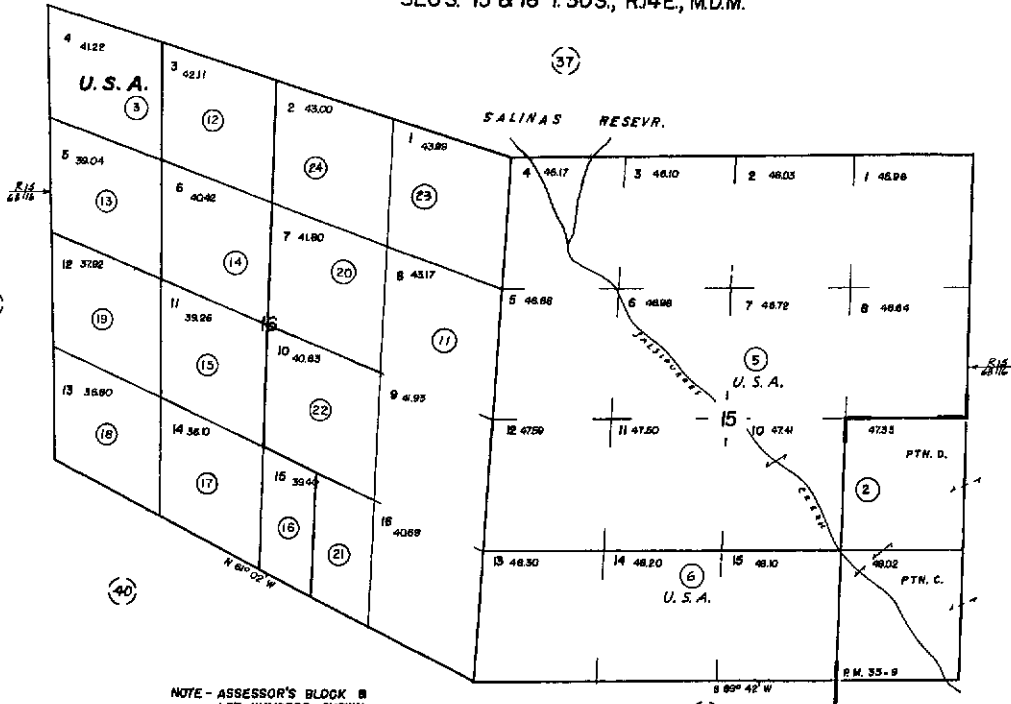
38

NOTE- ASSESSOR'S BLOCK & LOT NUMBERS SHOWN IN CIRCLES.

ASSESSOR'S MAP  
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY  
CALIFORNIA

REV. 11/2/69  
4/19/87  
10-26-91

SEC'S 15 & 16 T.30S, R.14E, M.D.M.



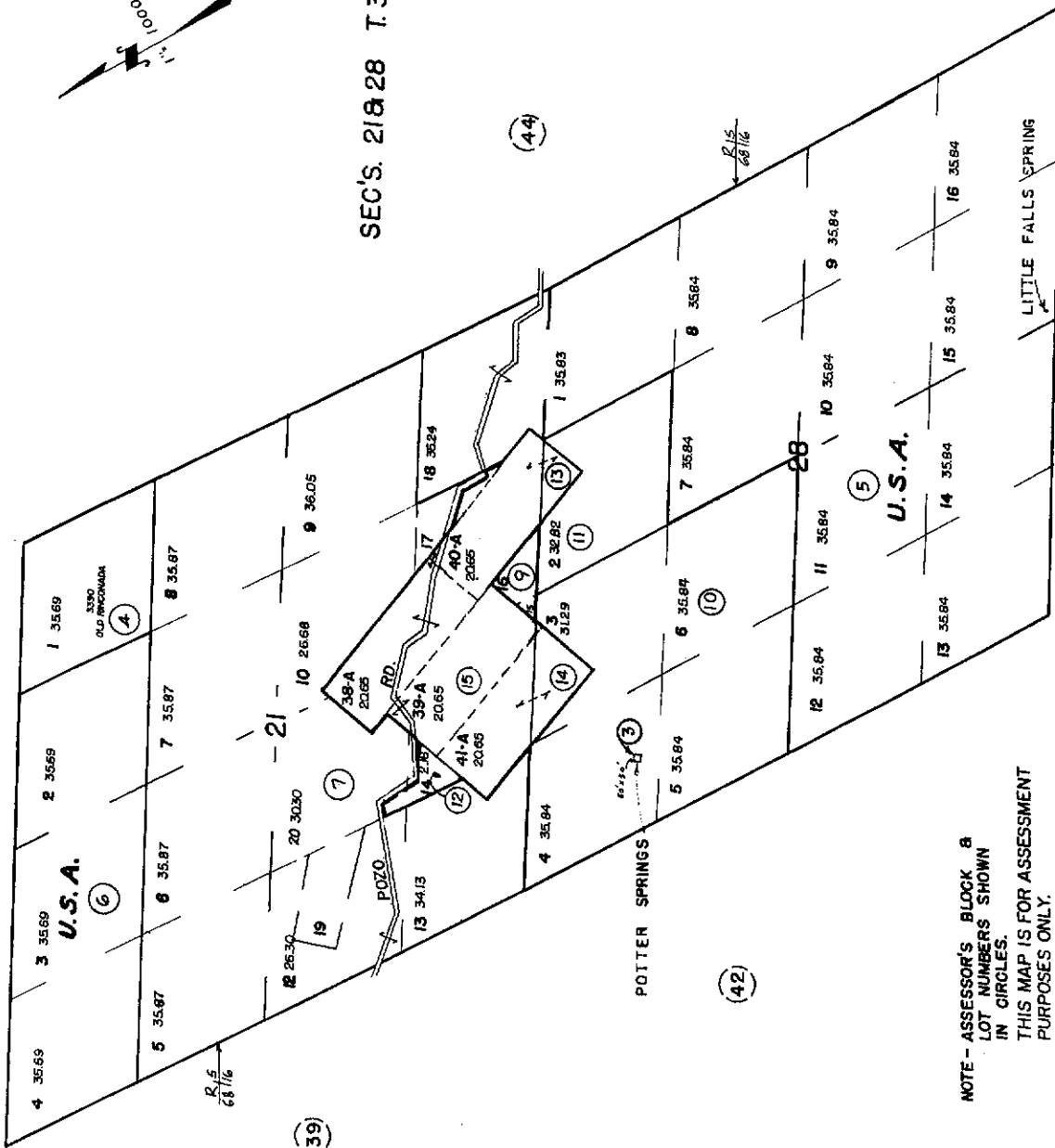
THIS MAP IS PREPARED FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY



NOTE - ASSESSOR'S BLOCK & LOT NUMBERS SHOWN IN CIRCLES.

ASSESSOR'S MAP SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY CALIFORNIA

REV. 7-27-81 3-11-85



ASSESSOR'S MAP  
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY  
CALIFORNIA

NOTE - ASSESSOR'S BLOCK &  
LOT NUMBERS SHOWN  
IN CIRCLES.  
THIS MAP IS FOR ASSESSMENT  
PURPOSES ONLY.

REV. 1/13/77  
5-17-81  
2-10-82  
2-10-83