



212 Locust Street, Suite C, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 ♦ (831) 420-5200

January 11, 2021

## **Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Public Scoping Meeting Notice**

**RE: Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project**

To Interested Agencies and Persons:

The City of Santa Cruz (City) as the Lead Agency for the Newell Creek Pipeline (NCP) Improvement Project (Proposed Project) has issued this Notice of Preparation (NOP) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to notify responsible and trustee agencies and other interested parties that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. The City is soliciting public input regarding the scope and content of environmental information to be included in the EIR.

The NOP provides information about the public review and comment period, project location, project description, and the probable environmental effects of the Proposed Project, and is posted on the City's website at [cityofsantacruz.com/waterenvdocs](http://cityofsantacruz.com/waterenvdocs).

### **Public Review and Comment**

The City is interested in receiving input from agencies and the public with regard to the proposed replacement and improvement activities. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the Proposed Project, if any is required. Please respond with written comments regarding the proposed scope and the intended content of the EIR as it relates to your agency's area of statutory responsibility or your areas of concern or expertise. We are requesting that all comments be provided in writing to enable us to address the comments as intended in the EIR. Written comments are also requested from organizations and other interested parties regarding the scope and evaluation of potential environmental issues associated with the Proposed Project.

Written responses are due within 30 days of the receipt of this notice, as provided by state law. As such, a 30-day public review and scoping period is established from **January 15, 2021 to February 15, 2021**. Comments may be submitted by mail, email, or by attending the Public Scoping Meeting (see details below) and submitting a written comment. All comments should indicate a contact person for the agency or organization.

**All written responses are requested to be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 15, 2021, and should be sent to the following address:**

Doug Valby, Associate Civil Engineer  
City of Santa Cruz Water Department  
212 Locust Street, Suite C  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
Email: [dvalby@cityofsantacruz.com](mailto:dvalby@cityofsantacruz.com)

One public scoping meeting regarding the Proposed Project and EIR will be held. You or members of your agency, organization, or the public are invited to attend to provide written comments on the scope and content of environmental information to be included in the EIR. This meeting will include a brief overview of the proposed project and EIR process and allow time for questions about the project or process. The meeting will be held as follows:

The City of Santa Cruz Water Department (City) will hold one Scoping Meeting on February 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting will be held via Zoom for remote public participation. The call-in number and link for the presentation are provided below.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/99843466481>

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: +16699009128,,99843466481# or +13462487799,,99843466481#

Or Telephone, dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 669 900 9128 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 558 8656  
or +1 301 715 8592 or 888 788 0099 (Toll Free) or 833 548 0276 (Toll Free) or  
833 548 0282 (Toll Free) or 877 853 5247 (Toll Free)

Webinar ID: 998 4346 6481

International numbers available:

<https://zoom.us/j/99843466481>

## **Project Location and Existing Facilities**

The existing NCP is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County, except for the portion of the NCP that extends onto the City's Graham Hill Water Treatment Plant (GHWTP) property, which is located within the City, but is surrounded by unincorporated lands. Both the existing NCP and the Proposed Project extend approximately 9 miles between Newell Creek Dam, a City facility that impounds Loch Lomond Reservoir, to the north and GHWTP to the south (see Figure 1).

As shown on Figure 2, the northern segment of the existing pipeline extends from just south of the existing Newell Creek Dam to the Felton Booster Pump Station (FBPS) that is located at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and East Zayante Road. The Proposed Project would generally follow the existing

pipeline alignment in the northern segment with some minor realignments. Both the existing NCP and Proposed Project pipeline cross Newell Creek in two locations in the northern segment. The San Lorenzo River also is a major natural feature in the project area, and is located west of the existing pipeline and Proposed Project in some sections in the northern segment.

The southern segment of the existing NCP extends from the FBPS to the GHWTP. The existing pipeline extends from the FBPS under Zayante Creek and extends through an active lumber yard and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park and then along Graham Hill Road for approximately one mile to the GHWTP. The Proposed Project also would extend under Zayante Creek and follow a short section along the existing NCP alignment, but would then be rerouted to Graham Hill Road, as shown on Figure 2.

### **Project Background**

The NCP is a critical component of the City's raw water supply infrastructure. It conveys untreated water to and from the Loch Lomond Reservoir (see Figure 1), which is the City's only raw surface water storage facility. The NCP conveys untreated water to Loch Lomond Reservoir from the Felton Diversion on the San Lorenzo River and from Loch Lomond Reservoir to the GHWTP. The pipeline is critical to supplying the water system during dry seasons, extended dry periods, and storm events, when other water sources are diminished or otherwise impaired. The NCP conveys water to the water system via the FBPS to the GHWTP for treatment and distribution into the area served by the City. The FBPS is located approximately midway along the NCP alignment at the intersection of Graham Hill Road and East Zayante Road. When the San Lorenzo River has high flows and storage is available in the Loch Lomond Reservoir, the NCP is also used to pump water from the Felton Diversion on the San Lorenzo River up to the Reservoir (via the FBPS) to store for later use. Although the NCP is not used continuously, it is a critical component to the City's water supply when needed during both wet and dry seasons. It is also a backup source should one of the City's other raw water supplies become inoperable.

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to address the identified deficiencies in existing pipeline conditions, as well as provide improved access for maintenance and repair. The NCP was constructed in approximately 1960, is reaching the end of its useful life, and is experiencing increased frequency of breaks due to corrosion and land movement along portions of its alignment due to geological conditions. Due to steep terrain and landslides present in some locations, the existing NCP has been damaged and/or is located in areas that make access and repairs difficult, such as a portion of the existing NCP along Pipeline Road in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park and another section along a steep hillside in the Brackney area, east of Highway 9 between Felton and Ben Lomond.

### **Project Description**

The Proposed Project consists of replacement of 8.75 miles of the existing NCP with a new 24-inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC), ductile iron or high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipeline. The pipeline generally would be installed within existing road pavement, road right-of-way (ROW), and/or existing City's easements. The proposed northern NCP segment from the Newell Creek Access Road Bridge to the FBPS generally follows the existing NCP alignment with a few short re-alignments to avoid crossing private property. Wherever possible, the new pipeline would be installed parallel to the existing pipeline. The proposed southern NCP segment from the FBPS to the GHWTP generally includes a new pipeline section along Graham Hill Road. Figures 3 and 4 show the proposed NCP alignment sections

within the northern and southern segments, respectively. Once the new pipeline is installed and the interconnections are made, the majority of the existing NCP is expected to be abandoned in place.

Other components of the Proposed Project include installation of air release valves that extend approximately 24 inches above ground. The FBPS has been improved over the past decade, and no new pump stations are required. The Proposed Project may include widening and/or paving of existing roadway shoulders within existing road ROW.

## **Construction**

The Proposed Project is scheduled to be constructed in phases over multiple years from approximately 2022 to 2028. Three pipeline sections have been identified as having the highest priority for replacement and would proceed first: the Brackney North section in the northern segment as shown on Figure 3 and the two Graham Hill Road sections in the southern segment that would replace the existing pipe through Henry Cowell State Park as shown on Figure 4. For sections of the pipeline that are installed using standard trenching techniques, it is expected that approximately 60 to 100 linear feet of new pipeline would be installed per day on average.

The majority of the Proposed Project would be installed within existing roadways and using conventional (open cut) trenching methods. Special construction techniques may be utilized in the Brackney area, which has experienced multiple landslides that have damaged the pipeline, and the risk of additional damage by future landslides is of great concern. The methods that would be utilized for this pipeline segment would consist of a combination of constructing the pipeline within the bedrock using micro-tunneling or deep trenches, where feasible. It is anticipated that construction at creek crossings would involve extending the pipeline along existing roadways and bridges, or utilizing trenchless methods to tunnel underneath the creeks. No construction is anticipated within flowing channels. The City has adopted standard construction practices that would be implemented by the City or its contractors during construction activities to provide erosion and air quality controls and water quality and habitat protection. Traffic controls would be in place for construction activities in roadways.

## **Probable Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project**

After completing a preliminary review of the Proposed Project, as described in Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City has determined that an EIR should be prepared to assess the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. Because the preparation of an EIR is clearly required for the Proposed Project, an Initial Study will not be prepared.

The EIR will address environmental impacts of the Proposed Project's construction and operation activities, and will propose mitigation measures to address significant impacts that are identified. The following describes the anticipated environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIR.

- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Effects on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions would primarily be associated with construction activities and would be temporary and short term. However, both construction and operational emissions of criteria pollutants and greenhouse gasses will be estimated using the California Emissions Estimator Model emissions model and compared to the Monterey Bay Air Resources District emissions-based thresholds to assess potential impacts.

- Biological Resources. Potential impacts on biological resources could result from construction near existing waterways, such as Newell and Zayante Creeks, and sensitive habitat areas, such as the Zayante Sandhills. The Zayante Sandhills are a unique community of plants and animals found in the project area. Potential direct and indirect impacts to sensitive vegetation communities, special-status plant and wildlife species, and jurisdictional aquatic resources associated with both construction and operation of the Proposed Project will be assessed based on a biological survey of the study area and preparation of a technical biological resources report to support the EIR analysis.
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources. Potential impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources that could occur during ground-disturbing construction activities will be evaluated. This includes both archaeological and historical resources. A cultural resources inventory and evaluation report will be prepared to support the EIR analysis.
- Energy. A temporary increase in the consumption of energy would be required during construction and limited change in the use of power would be required for operation of the pipeline. The impact analysis will assess if the Proposed Project would result in potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation, or conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.
- Geology and Soils. Construction of the Proposed Project could result in site-specific impacts on or from local geology and soils conditions. Potential impacts related to geologic, seismic, and soils constraints will be assessed. Potential impacts to paleontological resources will also be evaluated.
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Potential impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials will be evaluated including the potential hazardous materials associated with transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials during construction and potential hazardous emissions or hazardous materials used during construction and operations.
- Hydrology and Water Quality. Potential impacts related to hydrology and water quality will be assessed including temporary and permanent impacts to hydrology and water quality as a result of near-stream construction.
- Noise and Vibration. Potential construction-period noise and vibration impacts to sensitive receivers (residences) in the vicinity of the Proposed Project will be assessed with modeling based on noise measurements taken at the site and review of construction phases and equipment usage. Operational noise would not be expected to change with the Proposed Project and therefore will not be analyzed in detail in the EIR.
- Transportation. Construction-related vehicle trips will be estimated and temporary construction-related traffic will be evaluated to identify any hazardous conditions on roadways or inadequacies in emergency access that may result during construction of the Proposed Project. Operation-period vehicle trips are anticipated to be similar to existing conditions, and will be described in the EIR.
- Wildfire. The Proposed Project is located in a state responsibility area, traversing moderate and high fire hazard severity zones. Therefore, this section will focus on the potential for construction activities to impair an emergency response or evacuation plan, exacerbate

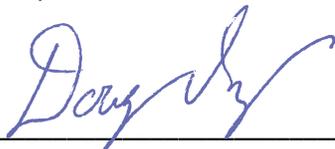
wildfire risks, and expose people to risks due to post-fire effects, consistent with standards in the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. The focus will be on elements of construction that could exacerbate fire hazard risks, however, once construction is completed, the underground pipeline would not create conditions that would affect wildland fire risks.

- Impacts Not Found Significant. The EIR will explain why other effects were determined to not be potentially significant and were not discussed in detail in the EIR. For example, the pipeline would not be visible from public viewpoints, would not damage scenic resources, or produce light and glare; therefore, no significant aesthetic impacts are anticipated.
- Other Sections. The EIR will include additional topics as required by the CEQA Guidelines including significant irreversible environmental changes, growth inducement, cumulative impacts, and alternatives. The EIR will describe and evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project that would feasibly attain most of the Proposed Project's basic objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the Proposed Project. These alternatives may include alternative pipeline routes, including the Quail Hollow Road and Mount Hermon Road corridors, alternative construction techniques, and/or rehabilitation and/or replacement in place of the existing pipeline. For each alternative, the EIR will assess the degree to which it might reduce one or more identified significant project impacts, whether it could result in other new or increased impacts, its feasibility, and the degree to which it is consistent with the project objectives. The "No Project" alternative will also be evaluated as required by CEQA.

### Further Information

For environmental review information or questions about the Proposed Project, please contact Doug Valby at [dvalby@cityofsantacruz.com](mailto:dvalby@cityofsantacruz.com).

Sincerely,



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Doug Valby  
Associate Civil Engineer

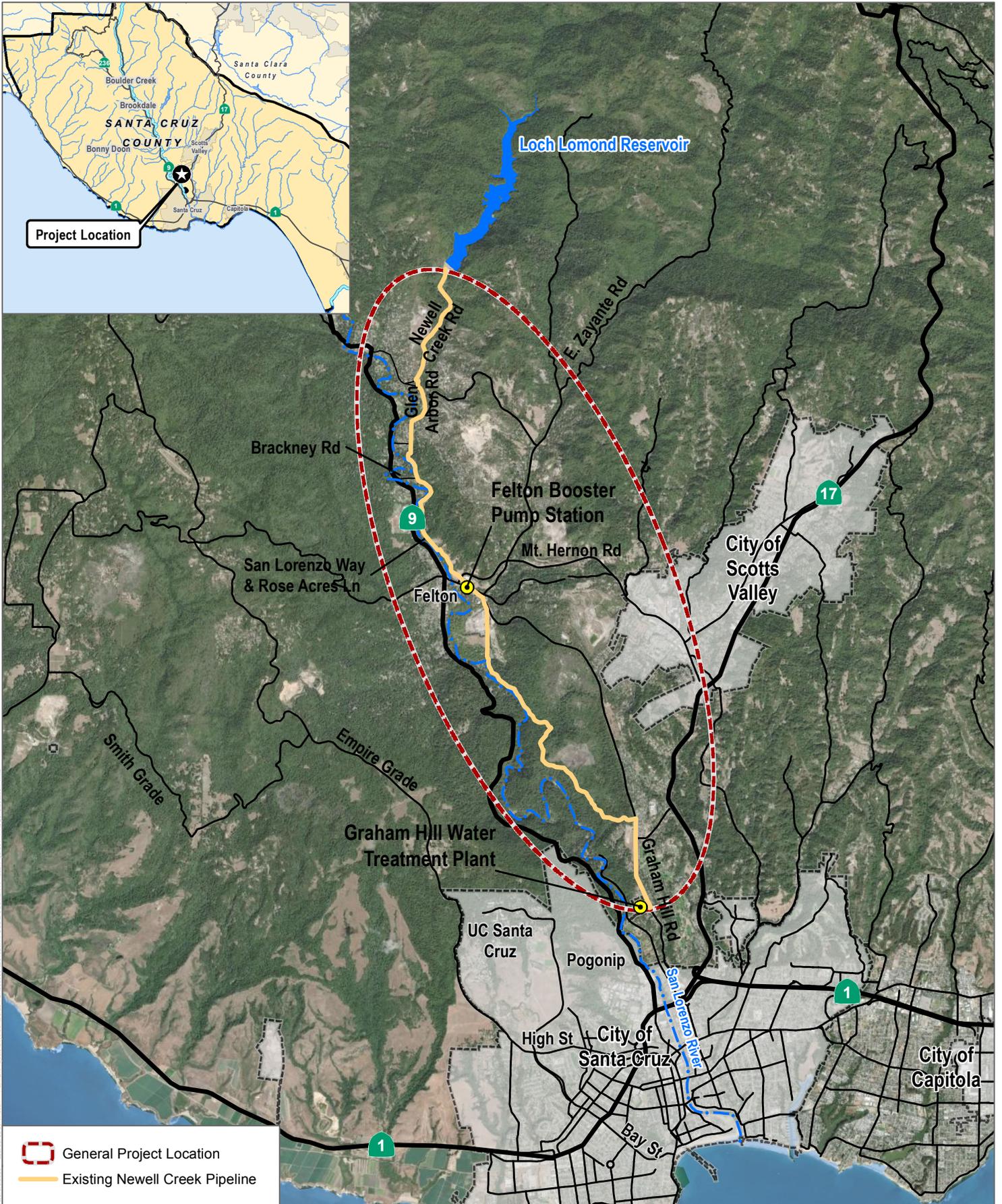
### Attachments

Figure 1: Regional Location

Figure 2: Proposed Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project Overview

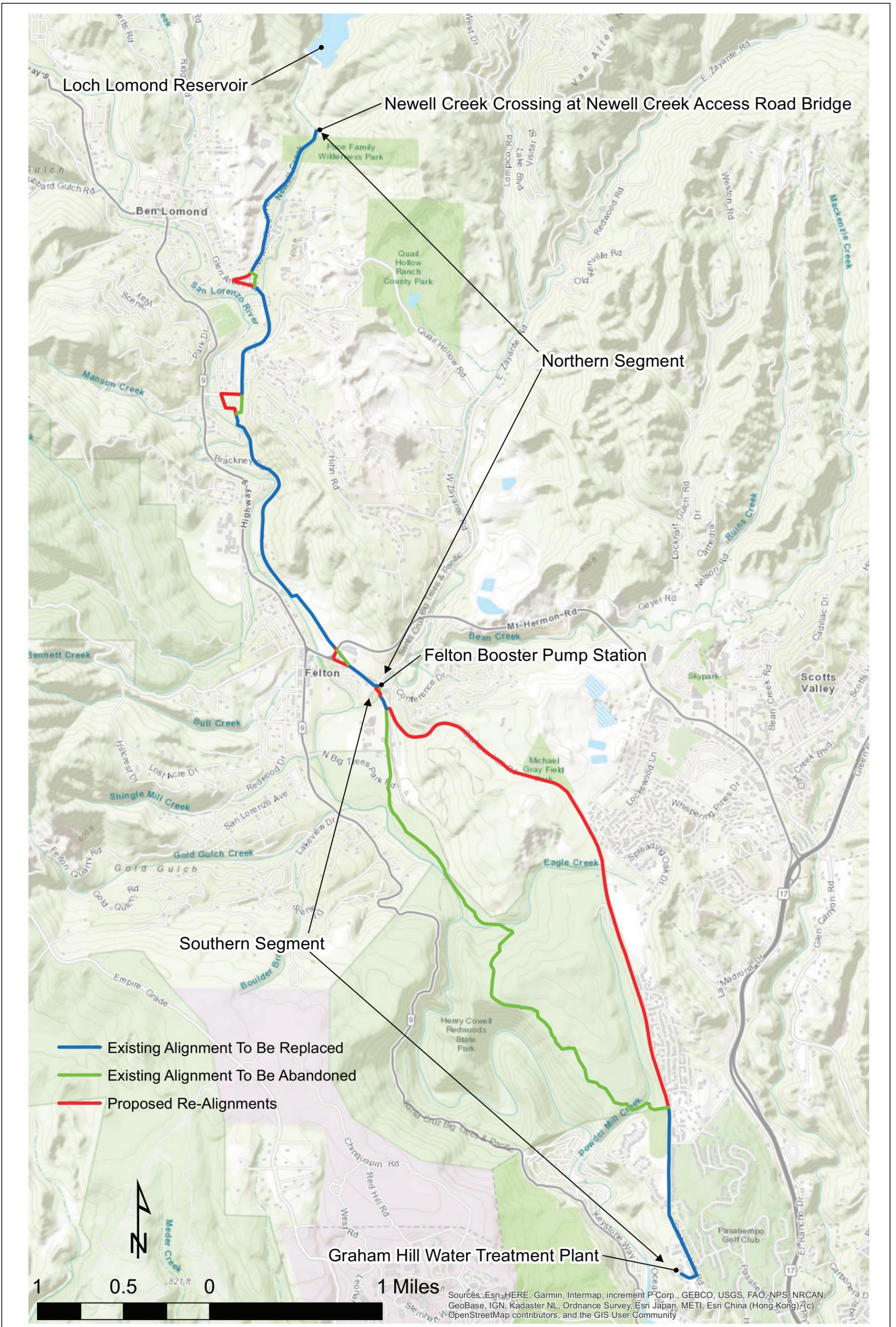
Figure 3: Proposed Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project Northern Segment

Figure 4: Proposed Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project Southern Segment

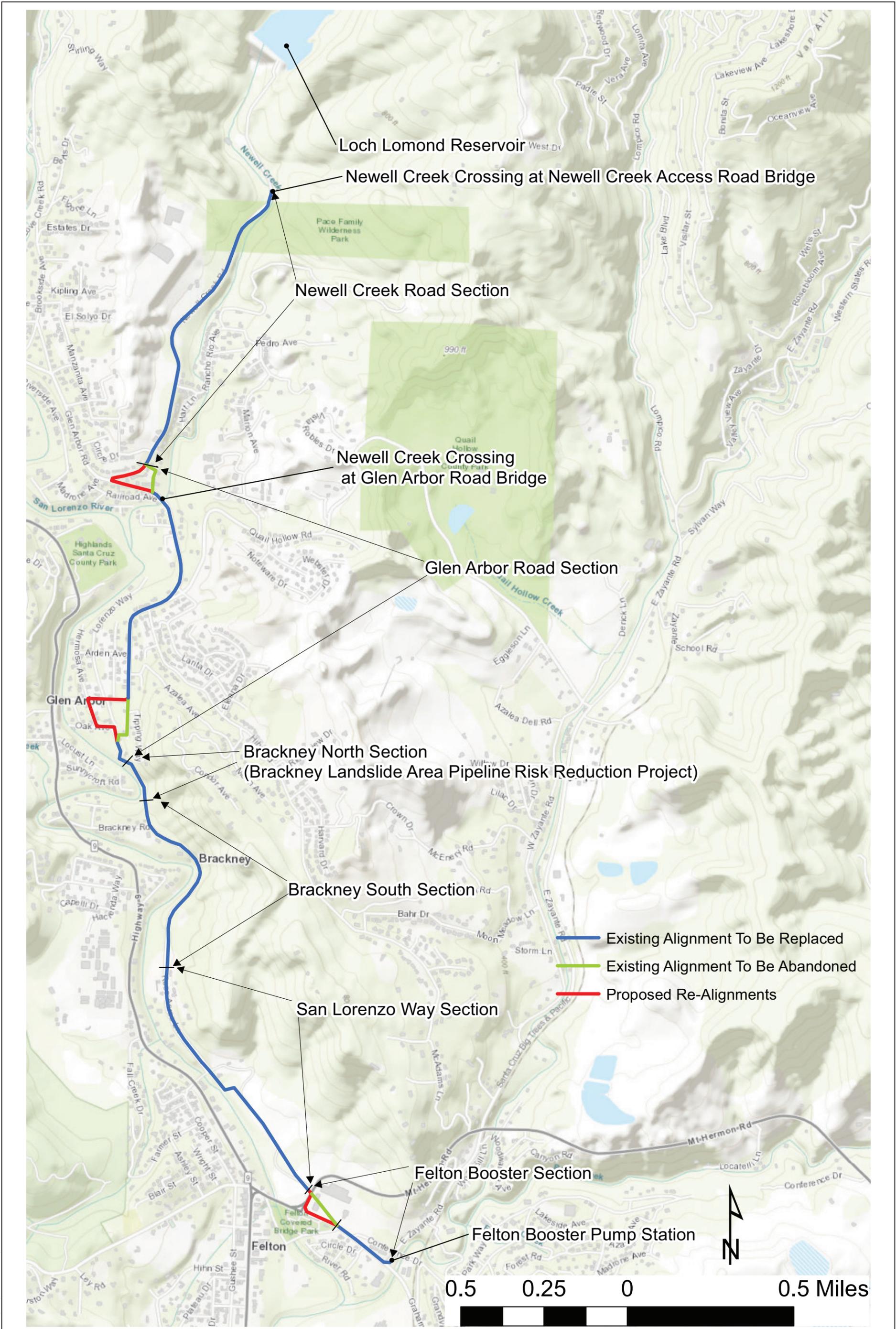


SOURCE: ESRI 2020, City of Santa Cruz 2020

**FIGURE 1**  
Project Location



SOURCE: City of Santa Cruz Water Department 2020

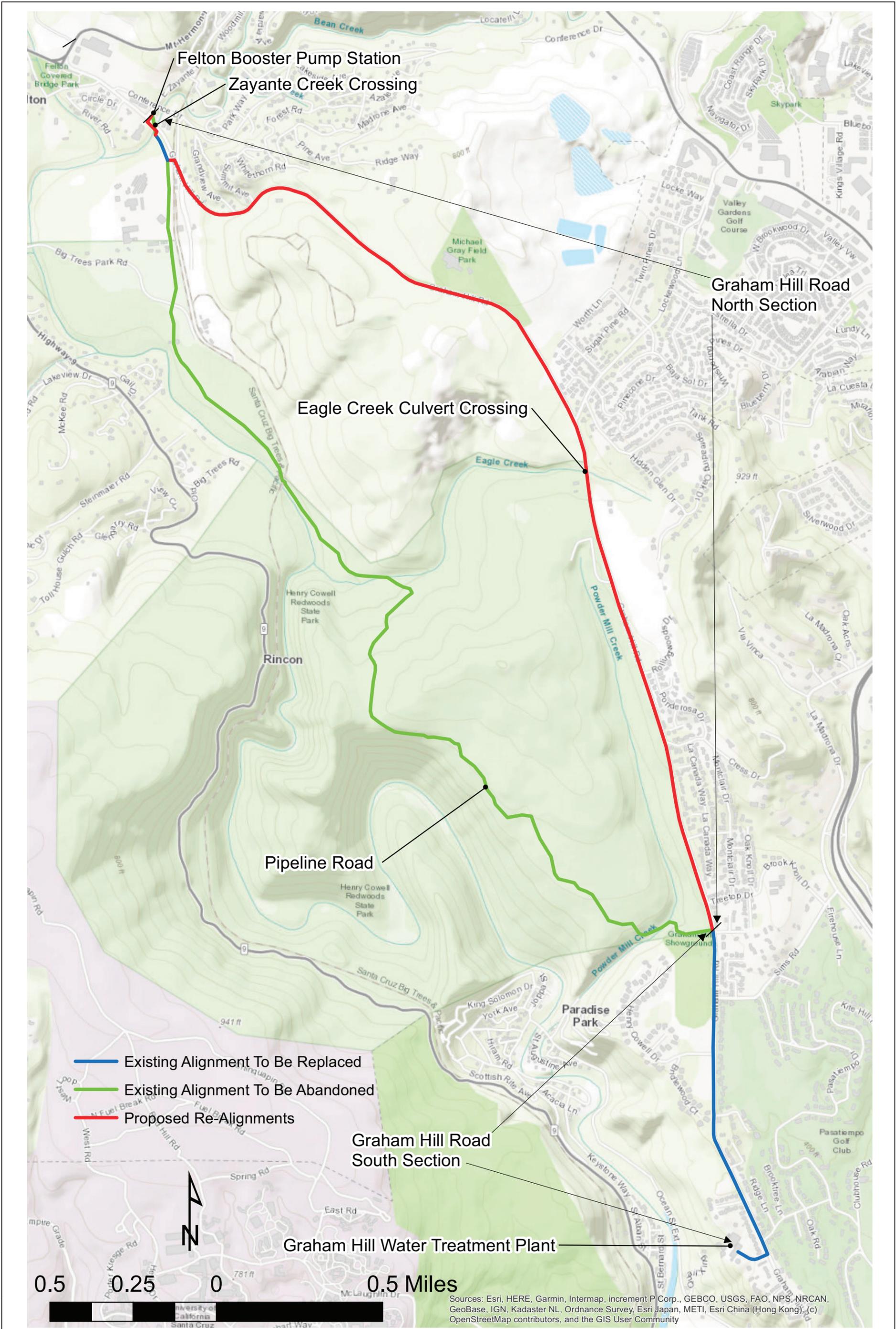


SOURCE: City of Santa Cruz Water Department 2020

FIGURE 3

Proposed Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project Northern Segment

Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project



SOURCE: City of Santa Cruz Water Department 2020

FIGURE 4

Proposed Newell Creek Pipeline Improvement Project Southern Segment