COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

DATE: November 9, 2026

TO: Agricultural Advisory Committee

FROM: Camille Leung, Planning Staff, (650) 363-1826

SUBJECT: Coastal Development Permit and Planned Agricultural Development Permit, pursuant to Sections 8.252.050 and 8.106.040 of the County Ordinance Code, to provide for the following: 1) Legalization of a 820 sq. ft. Outdoor Commercial Kitchen and Signage at Highway 1; 2) Farmstand building reinforcement/repairs; 3) New 1,500-sq. ft. Bunkhouse (Farm Labor Housing) to house eight workers; 4) New 300-sq. ft. Restroom Building; 5) Septic and Water Storage System Expansion; 6) associated traffic improvements at Pie Ranch; and 7) legalize special events which have already been in operation for many years, including an annual 300-person fundraiser and private events/weddings, located at 2080 Cabrillo Highway, in the unincorporated Pescadero area of San Mateo County. The project involves only minor grading and no tree removal. This project is appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

County File Number: PLN2015-00208 (Pie Ranch/Lawson)

PROPOSAL

The applicant, Jered Lawson, requests a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and Planned Agricultural Development Permit (PAD) to implement the Pie Ranch Master Plan, which involves legalization of structures built without a permit, including 1) a 820 sq. ft. Outdoor Commercial Kitchen and Signage at Highway 1, and construction including 2) farmstand building reinforcement/repairs (including a new commercial kitchen, a new 605 sq. ft. covered deck, two new restrooms, new cupola, new signage, and ADA and drainage improvements); 3) a new 1,500 sq. ft. Bunkhouse (Farm Labor Housing) to house eight workers (to replace three unpermitted yurts); 4) a new 300 sq. ft. Restroom Building; 5) Septic and Water Storage System Expansion; 6) associated traffic improvements per the recommendations of the traffic reports; and 7) legalization of special events which have already been in operation for many years, including:

- Farm-related events: 13 barn dances and potluck dinners annually, farm tours, corporate/organizational group-building events, youth and adult education, and associated parking.
- Public Events include an annual 300-person fundraiser and private events/weddings (13 events/yr).

The project involves only minor grading and no tree removal.

The western portion of the project site along Green Oaks Creek is located in Flood Zone A, a special flood hazard area designation, with a 1% annual chance of flooding. The projects involves these buildings located in Zone A:

- Farmstand renovation and deck addition
- Legalization of Outdoor Kitchen (unenclosed)
- Proposed Restroom Building near the re-built Steele Family Farmhouse

The remaining area of the project site is located in Flood Zone X (Area of minimal flood hazard, usually depicted on FIRMs as above the 500-year flood level), per FEMA Panel No. 06081C0470E, effective October 16, 2012). The proposed Bunkhouse is located in Zone X.

This project is appealable to the Coastal Commission.

DECISION MAKER

Planning Commission

QUESTIONS FOR THE AGRICULURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Will the development have any negative effect on surrounding agricultural uses? If so, can any conditions of approval be recommended to minimize any such impact?

2. What position do you recommend that Planning staff take with respect to the application for this project?

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: Camille Leung, Senior Project Planner

Applicant: Jered Lawson

Owner: Pie Ranch

Location: Property located at 2080 Cabrillo Highway, north of Green Oaks Way, at the southern border of the County, unincorporated Pescadero area of San Mateo County.

APN: 089-230-210

Parcel Size: Approximately 13 acres

Existing Zoning: Planned Agricultural District/ Coastal Development District (PAD/CD)

General Plan Designation: Agriculture

Local Coastal Plan Designation: Agriculture

Williamson Act: The property is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

Existing Land Use: Agricultural uses and events

Water Supply: The project relies on well and in-stream water sources for the following uses:

- Drinking Water: Potable water on the site comes from a well near the Farmstand. Previous well tests indicate a minimum of 25 gallons per minute. Per the applicant, Pie Ranch has never had a shortage of water. Green Oaks Creek is not a source of potable water for the subject property. Proposed Change: None.

- Agricultural Water: The adjoining parcel (APN 089-230-280), owned by the applicant, has an in-stream 2 acre-ft agricultural pond on Green Oaks creek and uses this water as part of their agricultural water supply, as well as a 275-foot deep well. Water is piped from these sources to the subject parcel to provide adequate Agricultural water supplies. Proposed Changes: None.

- Fire Water: There is currently a 29,500-gallon water tank installed for the fire rebuild of the Steele House (Farmhouse) with wet draft hydrants per permit BLD2021-00921. There are an additional two 5,000-gallon tanks near the Farmstand. A second wet draft hydrant for use by San Mateo County Fire Department was added at the Farmstand.

Sewage Disposal: The site is served by an existing septic system located near the center of the property (between an animal barn and the Steele House); The project includes a new septic system. Based on the proposed improvements and estimated occupancy, peak wastewater flows that would be collected and treated are estimated to be 1,773 gallons per day (gpd). The site evaluation and County Environmental Health guidelines indicate that 1,200 linear feet of leachfield trench is required. Mapping of the leachfield area shows there is sufficient disposal area to install leachfields that will match the required capacity.

Flood Zone: The western portion of the project site along Green Oaks Creek is located in Flood Zone A, a special flood hazard area designation, with a 1% annual chance of flooding. The projects involves these buildings located in Zone A:

- Farmstand renovation and deck addition

- Legalization of Outdoor Kitchen (unenclosed)
- Proposed Restroom Building near the re-built Steele Family Farmhouse

The remaining area of the project site is located in Flood Zone X (Area of minimal flood hazard, usually depicted on FIRMs as above the 500-year flood level), per FEMA Panel No. 06081C0470E, effective October 16, 2012). The proposed Bunkhouse is located in Zone X.

Environmental Evaluation: The project is not exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and requires an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) under CEQA Guidelines. The property would result in development located within the Cabrillo Highway State Scenic Corridor and would result in the conversion of soils meeting the Local Coastal Program (LCP) definition of prime soil for agricultural structures. Available at https://www.smcgov.org/planning/2080-cabrillo-highway-pescadero-sch-2026080162

Setting: The project parcel is accessed via Cabrillo Highway using a driveways located to the north, and Green Oaks Way on the south side of the parcel. Green Oaks Creek runs north-south through the parcel near Cabrillo Highway and runs alongside the northern property line of the parcel to the east. The parcel is relatively flat.

Chronology:

Date		Action
May 14, 2015	-	Application submitted in response to Department enforcement of unpermitted structures and events.
July 29, 2015	-	Multi-agency inspection of property by CalFire, Environmental Health Services, Building Official, and Planning Staff. Staff identified and inspected unpermitted structures on the property, including three yurts, an outdoor kitchen, storage buildings/containers, and a greenhouse, as well as unpermitted improvements to the Farmstand (kitchen, produce washing station) and unpermitted agricultural and non-agricultural events. Staff provided urgent health and safety corrections and longer-term permitting requirements. Subsequently, the applicant addresses urgent health and safety corrections.
2015 - 2022	-	Project is referred to review agencies, including CalFire, Environmental Health Services, Coastal Commission and the Planning and Building Department's Geotechnical Section, with comments provided from review agencies. For environmental review, staff requests biological, traffic, and

		historical reports (for modifications to Farmstand), among other information requests. Application remains incomplete.
August 2020	-	CZU Fire destroys the historic Steele house which was used for farm labor housing.
December 2022	-	Applicant submits Master Plan, detailed plans, as well as biological, traffic, and historical reports. Staff prepares Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND).
August 10, 2026	-	An IS/MND was prepared and released for public review from August 10, 2026, to September 9, 2026. Available at https://www.smcgov.org/planning/2080-cabrillo-highway-pescadero-sch-2026080162
August 11, 2026	-	County staff notified AAC members by email of the posting of the IS/MND
	-	Staff received comment letters from Caltrans, Santa Clara Water Quality Control Board (SWQCB), and California Coastal Commission (CCC) available at https://www.smcgov.org/planning/2080-cabrillo-highway-pescadero-sch-2026080162
November 9, 2026	-	Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting.

Will the project be visible from a public road?

The project site is located completely within the Cabrillo Highway State Scenic Corridor. The existing signage and proposed improvements to the farmstand would be visible from Cabrillo Highway. The farmstand building is 2,201 sq. ft. The proposed work will consist of structural and interior renovations including a new commercial kitchen for on-site pie baking and new accessible restrooms, as well as exterior improvements such as a new ADA ramp, a new 675 square foot deck with a 590-square foot cover, and a new cupola. The proposed changes to the farmstand would only be minimally visible from the highway and the most visible components (sign and deck) will be consistent with the agricultural and rural surroundings. The farmstand is not associated with the Green Oaks Dairy and is not a historic resource meeting the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources. Buildings or structures that are not eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources are not historic resources as defined by California Environmental Quality Act.

Will any habitat or vegetation need to be removed for the project?

The project does not involve vegetation or habitat removal. However, based on the close proximity of project activities to sensitive habitat and species that may be present in or near to Green Oaks Creek, Additional Mitigation Measures (AMMs) have been added as mitigation measures of the IS/MND to ensure adequate protection of these species in addition to their habitats. Additional Mitigation Measures require pre-construction biological surveys, worker training, limiting work to daylight hours, exclusion fencing, and review of the landscape plan for compatibility with habitat.

Is there prime soil on the project site?

The project involves the conversion of farmland to uses that are accessory to agricultural use. The subject property contains large areas of prime soil, including Class II soils (Lockwood loam, gently sloping) over a northern portion of the parcel, as shown in Attachment D. Class I or Class II Agriculture Soils and Class III Soils are rated good or very good for artichokes or Brussels sprouts. The project would convert approximately 1,500 sq. ft. of Class II soils for permanent structures (including outdoor kitchen and Farmstand).

DISCUSSION

A. KEY ISSUES

Planning staff has reviewed this proposal and has concluded the following:

1. Compliance with Planned Agricultural District (PAD) Regulations:
   In order to approve and issue a PAD Permit, the project must comply with the substantive criteria for the issuance of a PAD permit, as applicable and as delineated in Section 6355 of the Zoning Regulations. As proposed and to be conditioned, the proposal complies with the following applicable policies, which will be discussed further in the project staff report to be prepared for the Planning Commission.

   - The encroachment of all development upon land which is suitable for agricultural uses and other lands shall be minimized;
   - All development permitted on a site shall be clustered;
   - Development shall be located, sited and designed to carefully fit its environment so that its presence is subordinate to the pre-existing character of the site and its surrounding is maintained to the maximum extent practicable.
   - No use, development or alteration shall substantially detract from the scenic and visual quality of the County; or substantially detract from the natural characteristics of existing major water courses, established and mature trees and other woody vegetation, dominant vegetative communities or primary wildlife habitats.

- Where possible, structural uses shall be located away from prime agricultural soils.

While the to-be-legalized outdoor kitchen is located on prime agricultural land, the applicant has clustered the outdoor kitchen with other structures, where the structure is accessed via existing access roads, sited as far from Cabrillo Highway, and where large areas of agricultural fields are reserved for continued farming. The applicant plans to add a deck to the existing farmstand in an area that is not farmed as it is constrained by the creek and the road. The 300 sq. ft. bathroom building would be located on prime soils but would be built in the footprint of an existing shed used as a pantry.

The design of the proposed buildings are rustic in nature and would fit the environment so that their presence is subordinate to the pre-existing character of the site and the surroundings are maintained to the maximum extent practicable. As such, the project would not detract from the scenic and visual quality of the County; or substantially detract from the natural characteristics of existing major water courses, established and mature trees and other woody vegetation, dominant vegetative communities or primary wildlife habitats.

2. Compliance with Local Coastal Program (LCP) Policies:

a. *Density Credits*

Policy 1.8 *(Land Uses and Development Densities in Rural Areas)* allows in rural areas land uses that are designated on the LCP Land Use Plan Map, and conditional uses up to the densities specified in Tables 1.2 and 1.3. Agricultural water uses are excluded from density analysis. For conditional uses, every legal parcel has one allocated density credit which equates to 315 gallons per day (gpd) of water use, or fraction thereof, of average daily water use during the two months of highest water use in a year. Expanded or additional non-agricultural uses shall only be permitted on a parcel when there are enough density credits available to that parcel to meet the density credit requirements of this policy for both (a) existing uses, and (b) any expanded or additional uses, and only where such development meets all other applicable policies of the Local Coastal Program.

However, visitor-serving, commercial recreation, and public recreation uses are allowed 945 gpd for the first density credit (Section 6356 of the PAD Regulations). As a legal parcel, the property has one density credit, where the farmstand meets the requirement for visitor-serving use (See Section A.2.d below), then allotting the property 1.5 density credits. Staff has performed a density analysis calculation (see Attachment F) for the farmstand (1 density credit for 1,620 sq. ft. of

food sales use, increased to 2,430 sq. ft. for visitor-serving use) and events proposed for legalization (based on water use on highest capacity day), as summarized below:

- Based on the proposed 975 sq. ft. floor area of the farmstand used for food sales, the farmstand consumes 40% of the maximum 2,430 s.f. for 1.5 density credits. The applicant intends for the farmstand to be open daily, where with remaining water use per day (intensity of non-agricultural uses) should not exceed 60% of the 1.5 density credits (567 gpd or 60% of 945 gallons/day). The remaining 567 gpd is allocated as follows to the farm and non-farm related events for legalization (where there is only one event per day):
    - As proposed, the Bay Area Youth Day is the highest capacity farm-related event involving 200 visitors. Based on water use as described in Attachment F, visitors would need to be adjusted to a maximum of 140 visitors a day.
    - As proposed, the highest capacity non-farm related event (private events and weddings) involving 150 visitors. Based on water use as described in Attachment F, visitors would need to be adjusted to a maximum of 140 visitors a day.

The 300-visitor annual fundraiser is not included in the density analysis as it occurs only one day every year and is subject to Temporary Special Event requirements. All events to be legalized are temporary in nature where the site is returned to its pre-event condition after the event. While estimated water usage is used for density analysis, in actuality, event water use would be lower as no septic usage is needed (reliance on portable toilets) for the annual fundraiser, weddings, or private events. Events do not involve additional permanent construction and non-cultivated lands are used for parking.

b. *Prime Agriculture Lands*

LCP Policy 5.5 *(Permitted Uses on Prime Agriculture Lands)* permits agricultural and agriculture-related development on prime agricultural lands; non-residential development customarily considered accessory to agricultural uses including barns, storage/equipment sheds, stables for farm animals, water wells, and water storage tanks. The policy allows for farm labor housing, uses ancillary to agriculture, and single-family residences to be conditionally permitted via a PAD permit.

The project would convert approximately 1,500 sq. ft. of Class II soils for permanent structures (including outdoor kitchen and farmstand), which are non-residential uses that are accessory to agriculture. The 300 sq. ft. bathroom building would also be located on prime soils but

would be built in the footprint of an existing shed used as a pantry. The bunkhouse would not be located on prime soils. The bunkhouse would replace housing currently provided by three unpermitted yurts that are located on prime soils. A mitigation measure has been added to require the removal of the three yurts upon final approval of the building permit for the bunkhouse.

There are also two unpermitted shipping containers located to the north of the farmstand located on prime soils. A mitigation measure has been added to require the removal of the two containers once construction of the harvest shed (BLD2023-03339) is complete.

As proposed, the area of farmland converted for permanent structures has been minimized through replacement of existing structures, use of disturbed areas containing existing structures, placement of new buildings along property boundaries, and removal of existing buildings located on prime soil. Therefore, the project minimizes farmland conversion. The project will maintain the existing agricultural use of the property and proposed structures are supportive and necessary to the existing agricultural operation.

c. *Sensitive Habitat*

Policy 7.11 *(Establishment of Buffer Zones)* requires: a. buffer zones of 50 feet for perennial streams and 30 feet for intermittent streams on both sides of riparian corridors; b. buffer zones 50 feet from the predictable high water point for perennial streams and 30 feet from the midpoint of intermittent streams where no riparian vegetation exists; and c. buffer zones of 100 feet from the high water point along lakes, ponds, and other areas, except for man-made ponds and reservoirs used for agricultural purposes for which no buffer zone is designated.

Figure 1 of the 2022 second addendum and biological update (Attachment E) to the initial 2016 Biological Impact Form and 2019 addendum shows the current extent of sensitive communities on the property including Green Oaks Creek and its associated riparian habitat, one tributary on the west side of the property, eucalyptus grove on the south side of the property (which provides documented roost habitat for federal candidate species the monarch butterfly), and a single pond with associated riparian habitat and emergent wetland vegetation (which provides habitat for federal listed California red-legged frog and San Francisco garter snake). As discussed in the IS/MND, no proposed work under this permit is within 100 feet of the pond or within 30 feet of Green Oaks Creek (creamery building, agricultural shed, Steele House, and 25,000 water storage tank are under separate permits). However, based on the close proximity of

project activities to sensitive habitat and species that may be present in or near to Green Oaks Creek, Additional Mitigation Measures (AMMS) have been added to the IS/MND to ensure adequate protection of these species in addition to their habitats. AMMs require pre-construction biological surveys, worker training, limiting work to daylight hours, exclusion fencing, and review of the landscape plan for compatibility with habitat.

d. *Visitor-Serving Use*

LCP Policies 11.1, 11.2, and 11.3 *(Definition of Visitor-Serving Facilities)* define visitor-serving facilities as public and private developments that are exclusively available to the general public and provide necessary, basic visitor support services such as lodging, food, water, restroom, and automobile services. The Pie Ranch farmstand meets this definition as it is a regionally well-known food concessionaire, where visitors from inside and outside of the County can purchase pies baked from ingredients grown at the site, as well as produce grown at the site.

3. Compliance with the Williamson Act:

The property is not subject to a Williamson Act contract.

4. Compliance with Farm Labor Housing Guidelines

The Farm Labor Housing Application Process guidelines allow for permanent housing structures in specific situations where there is an on-going long-term need for farm workers. The guidelines require Zoning Hearing Officer (or Planning Commission) review of applications for permanent housing and limits the use of these structures for the housing of farm workers. The bunkhouse is proposed to house a maximum of eight farmworkers employed at Pie Ranch.

ATTACHMENTS

Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) is available at https://www.smcgov.org/planning/2080-cabrillo-highway-pescadero-sch-2026080162

A. Vicinity Map
B. Project Plans
C. Program Statement
D. Prime Soils Map
E. Figure 1 of Sol Ecology Biological Report Addendum letter, dated November 9, 2022
F. Density Analysis Table