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# VITAL LANDS INITIATIVE & PROTECTING SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES IN SONOMA COUNTY

## Sensitive Natural Communities in Conservation Webinar

December 7, 2021

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An aerial photograph of a Sonoma County landscape. The foreground is dominated by lush green vineyard rows and dense evergreen forests. A winding river flows through the middle ground, bordered by more trees and some small buildings. In the background, rolling hills and valleys are visible under a clear sky, with some areas appearing misty or hazy. The overall scene depicts a diverse agricultural and natural environment.

**The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District permanently protects the diverse agricultural, natural resource, and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations.**







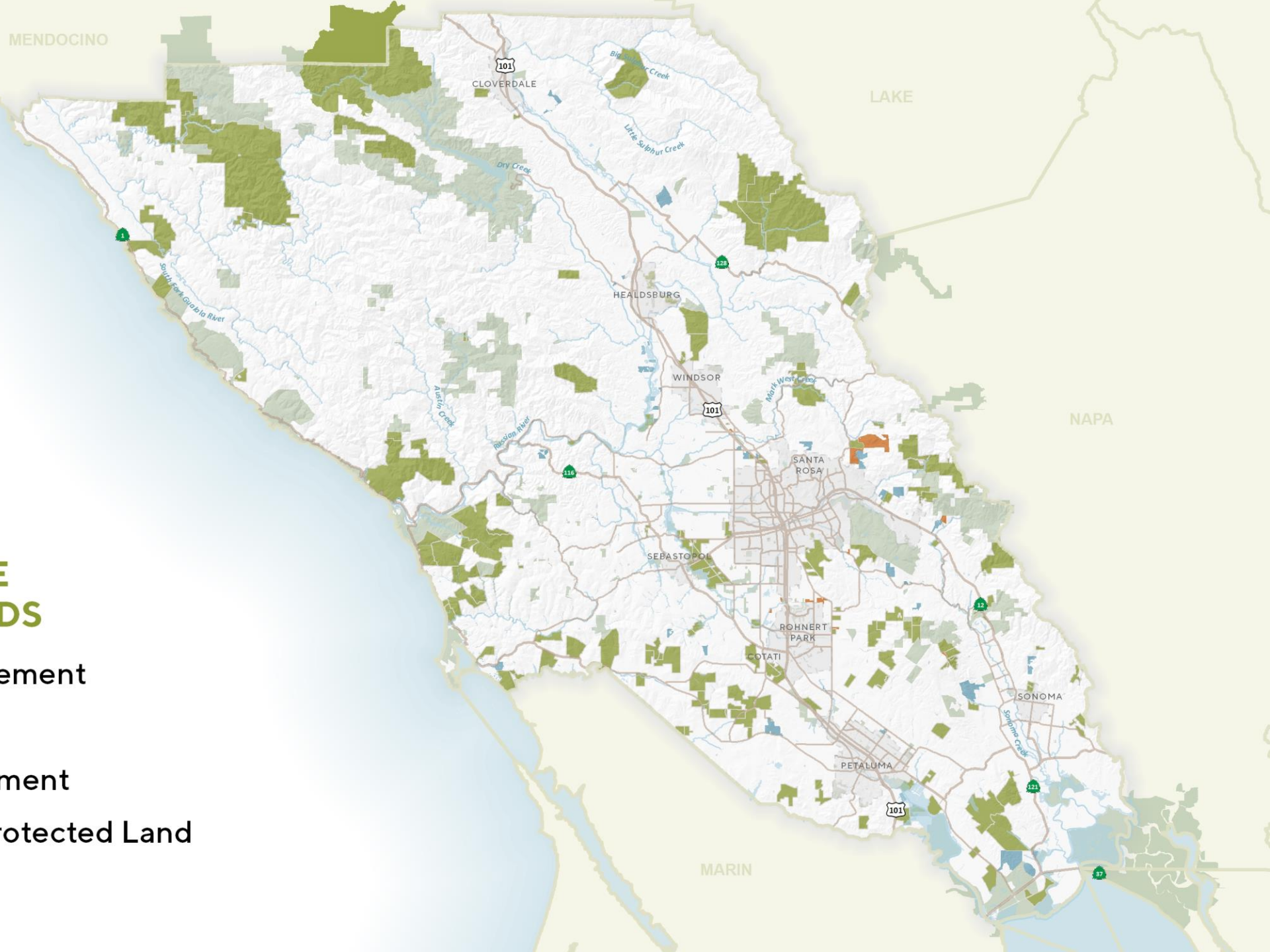


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## AG + OPEN SPACE PROTECTED LANDS

-  Conservation Easement
-  Fee Title
-  Open Space Easement
-  Other Public or Protected Land



# FINE-SCALE VEGETATION MAP



## SONOMA VEG MAP

SONOMA COUNTY VEGETATION MAPPING & LIDAR PROGRAM

*High-Quality Data for Planning, Conservation and Resource Management*





# FINE-SCALE VEGETATION MAP

- Vegetation Descriptions
- Sonoma Veg Map Final Report

www.sonomavegmap.org

## Classification of the Vegetation Alliances and Associations of Sonoma County, California

### Volume 2 of 2 – Vegetation Descriptions



#### Prepared by:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program  
California Native Plant Society Vegetation Program

#### For:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District  
The Sonoma County Water Agency

#### Authors:

Anne Klein, Todd Keeler-Wolf, and Julie Evens



December 2015

Map Class: Umbellularia californica Alliance

Common Name: California Bay Laurel



Ground View

Aerial View

**NVC Association(s):** Umbellularia californica – Acer macrophyllum Assoc., Umbellularia californica – Notholithocarpus densiflorus Assoc., Umbellularia californica – Pseudotsuga menziesii / Rhododendron occidentale Assoc., Umbellularia californica – Quercus agrifolia Provisional Assoc., Umbellularia californica (Pure – Coastal) Provisional Assoc. Umbellularia californica / Polystichum munitum Assoc.

#### Description:

Statewide (Savvy et al. 2009)

Umbellularia californica is dominant or co-dominant in the tree or tall shrub canopy with Acer macrophyllum, Aesculus californica, Alnus rhombifolia, Alnus rubra, Arbutus menziesii, Corylus cornuta, Juglans californica, Notholithocarpus densiflorus, Pinus sabiniana, Platanus racemosa, Pseudotsuga menziesii, Quercus agrifolia, Quercus chrysolepis, Quercus wislizeni, and Sequoia sempervirens.

In many cases, Umbellularia californica is the only tree species in older stands with few shrubs and herbs present (McBride 1974). Stands occur near the coast and inland in both mesic and riparian settings, usually in a patchwork with stands of other evergreen forest or chaparral alliances. Coastal stands have characteristically wind-pruned trees or shrubs, and both coastal and inland stands typically have dense, clonally sprouted plants. The stands may be shrubby, as on ultramafic soils such as in the western Klamath Mountains, or they may be trees within a larger matrix of chaparral, as in central and southern California. Historically productive stands were cleared for agriculture and residential development (Stein 1990b).

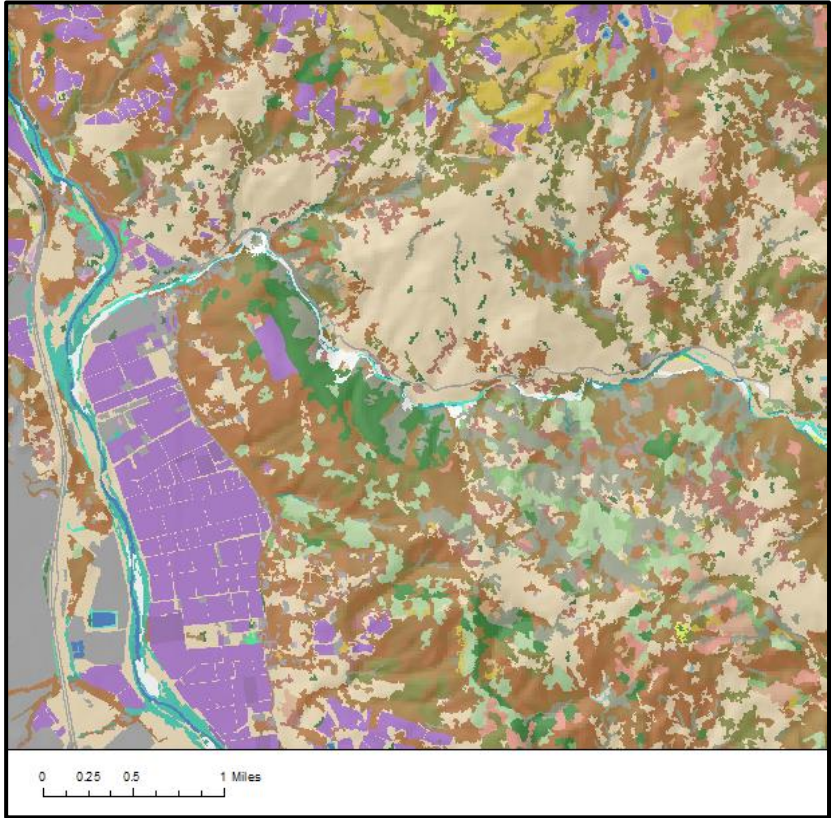
**Most Abundant Species:** Umbellularia californica

#### Distribution / Location:

In Sonoma County, this class has a wide range occurring from riparian settings, inland, and wind-blown upper slopes near the ocean. The elevation range of sampled sites is 88 to 2098 ft.

Acres mapped countywide:	46,834	Global/State Rarity Rank:	G4/S354?
Accuracy Assessment Map Sites:	32	User's Accuracy:	88%
Accuracy Assessment Reference Sites:	29	Producer's Accuracy:	76%







# VITAL LANDS INITIATIVE

- **Long-term vision for land conservation**
  - Reflects values of the community
  - Priorities for protection across multiple goal areas
  - Strategies for achieving goals given limited time and funds





# PROTECTING SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES

“Protect the **highest priority** old-growth and mature conifer and conifer-hardwood forests...oak woodlands, shrublands, grassland, and other non-woody vegetation”





The Vital Lands Initiative identifies **priority vegetation communities** according to **state rarity ranks** per the Survey of California Vegetation/NatureServe's Heritage Program and local rarity

## High Priority

- Critically imperiled (S1) or locally very rare (<0.1% cover)

## Medium-High Priority

- Imperiled (S2) or locally rare (S3 or S4 with <1% cover)

## Medium Priority

- Vulnerable (S3) or locally unique (S4 or S5 with <1% cover)

## Low Priority

- Apparently secure (S4 or S5)



Vegetation Alliance (Scientific Name)	Vegetation Alliance (Common Name)	Global Rank	State Rank
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> (bakeri, montana) Alliance	Baker or Mount Tamalpais chaparral	G1	S1
<i>Pinus radiata</i> Alliance	Non-native Monterey pine stand	G1	S1
<i>Abies grandis</i> Alliance	Grand fir forest	G4	S2
<i>Allium falcifolium</i> - <i>Eriogonum</i> spp. - <i>Streptanthus</i> spp. Provisional Alliance	Sickle-leaf onion – wild buckwheat – jewel-flower serpentine barrens	G2/3?	S2/3?
<i>Calamagrostis nutkaensis</i> Alliance	Pacific reed grass meadows	G4	S2
<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i> Alliance	Hazelnut scrub	G3	S2?
<i>Quercus parvula</i> var. <i>shrevei</i> Provisional Alliance	Shreve oak woodland	G2	S2
<i>Acer macrophyllum</i> Alliance	Bigleaf maple forest	G4	S3
<i>Aesculus californica</i> Alliance	California buckeye groves	G3	S3
<i>Arbutus menziesii</i> Alliance	Pacific madrone dominated woodland	G4	S3
<i>Ceanothus oliganthus</i> Alliance	Hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral	G3	S3
<i>Hesperocyparis macnabiana</i> Alliance	McNab cypress woodland	G3	S3
<i>Hesperocyparis sargentii</i> Alliance	Sargent cypress stand	G3	S3
<i>Notholithocarpus densiflorus</i> Alliance	Tanoak woodland	G4	S3
<i>Pinus lambertiana</i> Alliance	Sugar pine	G4	S3
<i>Pinus muricata</i> Alliance	Bishop pine forest	G3	S3
<i>Populus fremontii</i> Alliance	Fremont cottonwood forest	G4	S3
<i>Quercus garryana</i> Alliance	Oregon white oak woodland	G4	S3
<i>Quercus lobata</i> Alliance	Valley oak woodland	G3	S3
<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i> Alliance	Coast redwood forest	G3	S3



# Vital Lands Initiative Priority Vegetation Communities





# PROTECTING SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES



- **Reactive land conservation**
  - Project evaluation framework
  - Higher priority for sensitive natural communities
- **Proactive land conservation**
  - Identify targets and priority/focus areas
- **Real-time gap analysis**
  - Performance metrics and dashboard reporting
- **Conservation easement design & negotiation**
- **Long-term stewardship**





**WITH GRATITUDE**





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