The Santa Cruz Sandhills are a unique community of plants and animals found only on outcrops of Zayante sands in the central portion of Santa Cruz County. Due to their limited geographic range (Santa Cruz County) and narrow habitat specificity (Zayante Soils), the endemic communities and species of the Sandhills are naturally extraordinarily rare. Estimated to cover 6,000 acres originally, approximately 40% of Sandhills habitat has been lost, primarily due to sand quarrying and development.

The Santa Cruz Sandhills are home to a number of *plant* and *animal* species that are endemic to (found only in) the Sandhills. Named after the towns and neighborhoods in the region, they are:

- Ben Lomond Spineflower
- Ben Lomond Buckwheat
- Bonny Doon Silverleaf manzanita
- Santa Cruz Wallflower
- Santa Cruz Cypress
- Santa Cruz Monkeyflower
- Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat
- Mount Hermon June Beetle
- Zayante Band-Winged Grasshopper
The Mount Hermon June Beetle (*Polyphylla barbata*) is endemic to the Santa Cruz Sandhills, where it inhabits both the sand parkland and sand chaparral communities. This cryptic animal lives underground as a larva, feeding on the roots of plants for approximately two years. Males can be observed flying around searching for mates at twilight during the summer (May through September), earning them the name "June Beetle".

The Zayante Band-Winged Grasshopper is a small grasshopper endemic to open habitat characteristic of sand parkland within the Santa Cruz Sandhills. During days with warm to hot temperatures between May and September, this well-camouflaged grasshopper can be found basking or feeding on plants.

As a result of habitat loss, the Mount Hermon June Beetle and Zayante Band-Winged Grasshopper were listed as *endangered* by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1997.

**PERMIT PROCESS**

The permitting process for projects located in Sandhills depends upon whether your property is located within the Interim Programmatic Habitat Conservation Plan (IPHCP) area or not.

To determine if you are within the IPHCP area go to the County’s GIS by clicking on “Parcel Maps (GIS)” under the quick find on the Planning Department’s main webpage. Once there, select “Apps” and then select the “GIS Web option”. From here select the “IPHCP Area” from the Legend (circled in red below), then enter your Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) in the search box (circled in orange below), and click the search button.

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1 Refer to sections below for exceptions.

Last updated: 5/26/2021
If your parcel is in the IPHCP Area, it will show up on the GIS with a purple overlay (an example is shown below).
If your parcel is not located in the IPHCP Area, you can check to see whether your parcel potentially contains Sandhills habitat by also selecting “Potential Sandhills Habitat” (circled in green below) from the Legend and clicking the search button again. If your parcel is potentially located in Sandhills habitat, there will be a tan-ish colored overlay on the parcel.

**Properties Located within IPHCP Area**

Parcels within potential Sandhills Habitat have different procedures for obtaining building permits and may incur serious restrictions. The location within the habitat means that the parcel may contain County, State or Federally protected or threatened plants, animals or insects, or their habitat. If your property is located within the IPHCP area, impacts to endangered species are allowed to be mitigated through the purchase of conservation credits from the Zayante Sandhills Conservation Bank (ZSCB), only if the project meets the following eligibility requirements:

- The parcel size is no larger than 1.5 acres (larger parcels may be included based on the proposed project)
- The disturbance is minimized to the maximum extent to avoid and/or reduce impacts to Sandhills habitat
- The proposed project is residential in nature
- The proposed project disturbs no more than 15,000 square feet per existing parcel

Refer to IPHCP Processing Chart below for more information.
Properties Located in Sandhills Habitat but are **Outside** the IPHCP Area or project Doesn’t Meet all Eligibility Requirements

If your property is located outside the IPHCP area or if the project doesn’t meet all eligibility requirements, you **may** still be able to develop on your parcel, however there are more steps involved. Any impacts to endangered species are allowed to be mitigated through purchase of conservation credits from the Zayante Sandhills Conservation Bank only upon approval from the County Board of Supervisors and, if applicable, through environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Planning Department staff will still review the project to determine if disturbance is minimized and is reasonable for the site. In order for staff to support a project in Sandhills, the applicant must show that all efforts to avoid and minimize impacts have been considered and implemented to the maximum extent feasible. Once plans are received that staff feel are approvable, a short staff report is prepared and put on a Board of Supervisors meeting as a “consent” item. If the Board of Supervisors approves of the purchase of conservation credits, planning staff can approve the plans. **In some cases, where the proposed project meets all eligibility criteria (listed above) except for the size of the parcel (the parcel is over 1.5 acres), the parcel may be included within the IPHCP. These projects may be processed according to the IPHCP Processing Chart below.** For all other projects refer to the Sandhills Processing Chart below.

Once the application has been approved by the Planning Department the **applicant is still required to obtain an individual take permit (ITP) from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) prior to any site disturbance.** The ITP applications are prepared by a USFWS approved biologist (Jodi McGraw is currently the only USFWS approved biologist for Sandhills ITPs). Contact USFWS at (805) 644-1766 for more information.

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2 Parcels located outside the IPHCP area may be included within the IPHCP based on the location and scope of the project. Please contact Environmental Planning staff for more information.

_Last updated: 5/26/2021_
Applicant and County staff must confirm project follows **Sandhills Processing Chart** below.

Plans must identify total square feet of ground disturbance (temporary and permanent) and delineate the disturbance area.

Site visit by County staff to confirm disturbance area. Owner shall place construction fencing or staking around outline of disturbance prior to County site visit.

Planning staff will contact the Zayante Sandhills Conservation Bank (ZSCB) with the amount of disturbed area associated with the project to facilitate applicant’s purchase of credits. Applicant to purchase credits from ZSCB after obtaining form from County Planning staff.

Applicant must submit proof of purchase of credits, certificate of inclusion form, and a recorded Declaration of Restrictions form prior to approval of application.

Final inspection by County staff to confirm extent of disturbed area.
Contact the Planning Department: Logan Thompson at (831) 454-2530

Planning staff will determine whether or not the parcel lies within the Sandhills IPHCP area

Does the project meet the following requirements?
• The project is residential
• The project incorporates minimization measures to reduce impacts to Sandhills
• The project involves less than 15,000 square feet of disturbance (per existing parcel)

Refer to IPHCP Processing Chart (above) for County processing.

Note: Planning staff will contact US Fish and Wildlife to confirm inclusion in IPHCP is acceptable. Approval of the proposed project depends on this approval from USFWS. Contact Logan for more information and to discuss the proposed project in detail.

The project must be re-designed to minimize disturbance, reduce the total disturbance to less than 15,000 square feet and be a residential project. If the parcel size is greater than 1.5 acres, the applicant may mitigate onsite and obtain their own Incidental Take Permit (ITP) from USFWS. Contact Logan for more information.
Santa Cruz Sandhills References

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Local Representative
Chad Mitcham
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Watsonville, CA 95076
(805) 677-3328

Main Office
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The Zayante Sandhills Conservation Bank
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Sandhills Alliance for Natural Diversity (www.santacruzsandhills.com)

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