

# Desert Hills of the San Joaquin Valley

Bureau of Land Management public lands in the Panoche, Griswold and Tumey hills of southern San Benito and western Fresno counties provide a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities, including hunting, camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The rugged hills west of Interstate 5 provide habitat for many rare and endangered species once common to the San Joaquin Valley, such as the San Joaquin kit fox, giant kangaroo rat, and blunt-nosed leopard lizard. Other species of plants and animals in the area are similar to those more commonly seen in the southern deserts, such as the yellow-backed spiny lizard, desert night lizard, and glossy snake. Vegetation consists of annual grassland with occasional saltbrush, Mormon tea shrubs, and yucca. Typical plants found growing on the gypsum barrens found in the Panoche and Tumey hills include forked fiddleneck and protruding buckwheat.



Forked Fiddleneck

## Panoche Hills

Bounded by Panoche Valley and Little Panoche Valley, the Panoche Hills provide a badlands experience just an hour's drive from the Bay Area. Panoche Access Road winds east from Little Panoche Road up the side of the valley and crests on a windswept plateau dotted with desert tea and juniper. Further south and east the hills become a jumble of razor-backed ridges and plunging canyons. The low ambient light in the region creates ideal conditions for stargazing, and both amateur and professional astronomers travel every year to the hills to view the Perseid meteor shower.

## Griswold Hills

Turning south from Panoche Road towards the old mining town of New Idria brings the traveler to the Griswold Hills. A foot trail from the public parking lot zigzags up the hillside to the ridgetop above. The Griswold Hills are a destination for hunters seeking upland game birds, pigs and deer. Rock outcrops provide homes for the yellow-back spiny lizard, which sports a bright black-and yellow collar and can attain a total length of over one foot.

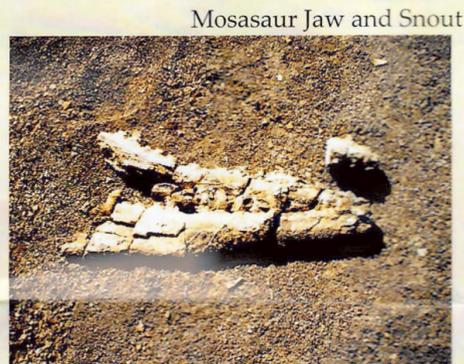
## Tumey Hills

Stretching along Interstate 5 south of Panoche Road, the Tumey hills are a jumble of bare rolling hills and valleys dotted with saltbush. Two entrances along Panoche Road give access to the area. Due to the characteristics of the highly erodible soils, massive sink holes can develop in roadways, locally referred to as "Tumey tunnels". Drivers are cautioned to beware of these hazards when traveling on designated routes!

## Traces of the Past

The Panoche, Griswold and Tumey Hills are underlain by marine sedimentary rocks primarily of Cretaceous age (65 million years ago). During the Cretaceous, most of California that we see today was underwater. Small islands, representing the very highest points of the present day Coast Range, had just begun to emerge from the ocean. The present day Central Valley was a shallow sea. Large sea-dwelling reptiles, such as Mosasaurus and Plesiosaurs, swam the shallow seas along with sea turtles and other marine animals near the islands.

Both the Tumey Hills and Panoche Hills have produced important fossil finds, including mosasaurs and hadrosaurs. A permit is required to collect vertebrate fossils.



Mosasaur Jaw and Snout



Artist Rendering of a Mosasaur

## Early Humans

While it is likely that the greater Central Valley has been used by humans for approximately 12,000 years or more, very few archeological sites have been found that date before 5,000 years ago.

Ancient prehistoric archeological sites reflect a mixed economy of both game procurement and use of wild plant foods. Settlement patterns show seasonal adaptation: sites in the valley were occupied during the winter but people moved into the foothills during the summer months. Later increases in mortar and pestle use indicate a reliance on acorns for sustenance and elaborate ceremonial and social organization within village sites.

Between 1805 and 1820 the Northern Yokuts were brought into the Missions at San Jose, Santa Clara, Soledad, San Juan Bautista, and San Antonio. From 1769-1846, traditional Indian life changed dramatically. Indians worked as laborers and were prevented from practicing traditional rituals and subsistence, leading to a severe decline in the Yokuts population.



Yokut Mortar

## Pastures, Present, & Future

The earliest permanent European settlers in the foothills of the South Coast Ranges were Mexican citizens. Mexican Governor Manuel Micheltorena granted a tract of land in this region in 1844 to Julian Ursua and Pedro Romero called "Panoche de San Juan y los Carrisalitos." The 22,000 acre rancho passed through a number of hands until the late 1870s, when Daniel Hernandez acquired the land and ran a sheep ranch.

Greater numbers of European-American settlers moved to the west-central San Joaquin Valley in the 1860s and 1870s, like Pleasant Valley. Large ranching enterprises - which spread from the Coast Range east to Fresno City - covered tens of thousands of acres. Cattle baron Henry Miller used land throughout this region as part of his cattle-ranching empire.

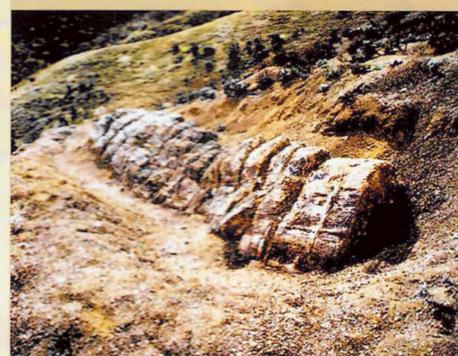
Livestock grazing continues on public lands in the Panoche, Griswold, and Tumey Hills under BLM grazing leases authorized by the Taylor Grazing Act of 1942. Please do not disturb livestock grazing on public lands and leave gates the way you found them.



Ewe & lambs in Panoche Hills

## How Can I Help?

Each summer, museums and universities conduct field expeditions to BLM lands under permit. Fossil enthusiasts can get involved and contribute to paleontology by volunteering at museums and educational institutions to study and work alongside trained paleontologists - - discovery, fieldwork, preparation, and curation are all components of paleontology work. Casual visitors can help protect unique resources by reporting the location of any vertebrate fossils found on public lands to the Hollister Field Office.



Fossilized Log

Anyone over the age of 18 years can volunteer. Youths must volunteer with a parent/guardian or be a part of an organized group such as a school, civic, or church with written consent. To become a volunteer, apply at Volunteer.gov and/or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at the BLM California Field Office nearest you!

## Camping & Hiking

Primitive, dispersed camping opportunities on BLM public lands in the Panoche, Tumey, and Griswold Hills are limited to 14 days within any 30-day period at a particular site. While there are no limitations on campsite locations, vehicles are restricted to designated routes. Hiking opportunities are also available at each of these areas on old roads and trails. Please practice Leave No Trace® principles when visiting all public lands.

## Hunting

Hunting opportunities on BLM public lands within the San Joaquin Valley consist primarily of game birds (chukar and quail), wild pig and deer. BLM and California Department of Fish and Game manage game animals for hunting by providing watering sites (guzzlers) and planting cover shrubs. All areas are known for the bird and pig opportunities, with deer being found primarily in the Griswolds.



Young Buck Near Griswold Hills

## Special Designations

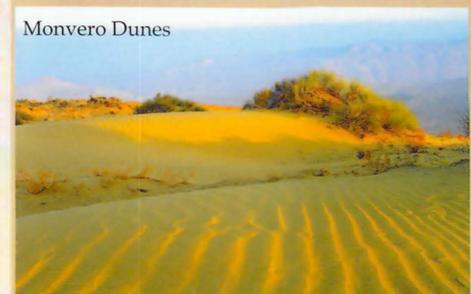
Two Wilderness Study Areas (WSA): Panoche Hills North & Panoche Hills South, are managed as 'de facto' wilderness until Congress determines their suitability for official wilderness designation. No motorized access is allowed within the WSA to prevent impacts to the wilderness values.

A large portion of these public lands are also included in the Panoche-Coalinga Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the Monvero Dunes Research Natural Area, which are managed to preserve and protect many special status plants and animal species that inhabit the region. Sightings of endangered San Joaquin kit foxes, blunt-nosed leopard lizards and giant kangaroo rats are not unusual; however, wildlife viewers should be careful to avoid disturbing these sensitive species.



Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard

The region has long been known to bird enthusiasts for the uncommon species that can be seen, such as phainopepla and mountain plover. Other animal species, like the San Joaquin antelope squirrel with its distinctive stripes, can also be seen by the alert wildlife watcher. The rare Civero aegialian scarab beetle and the San Joaquin dune beetle are found only in the Monvero Dunes.



Monvero Dunes

USE, SHARE, APPRECIATE!



Bureau of Land Management  
Central Coast Field Office  
940 2nd Avenue  
Marina, California 93933  
Phone: 831-582-2200

San Luis Reservoir State  
Recreation Area  
31426 Gonzaga Road  
Gustine, CA 95322  
(800) 346-2711

Pacheco State Park  
38787 Dinosaur Point Road  
Hollister, CA 95023  
(209) 826-6283

CA Dept of Fish and Game  
Little Panoche Rd  
5 miles W of Hwy 5 and 30 miles W of Fire-  
baugh, on the southern side of

Little Panoche Wildlife Area  
(209) 826-0463

CA Dept of Fish and Game  
Los Banos, CA 93835  
18110 Henry Miller Rd  
Los Banos Wildlife Area  
(209) 826-0463

CA Dept of Fish and Game  
Whites Bridge  
3 miles S. of Mendota near  
Mendota Wildlife Area  
(559) 655-4645

## Other Local Resources

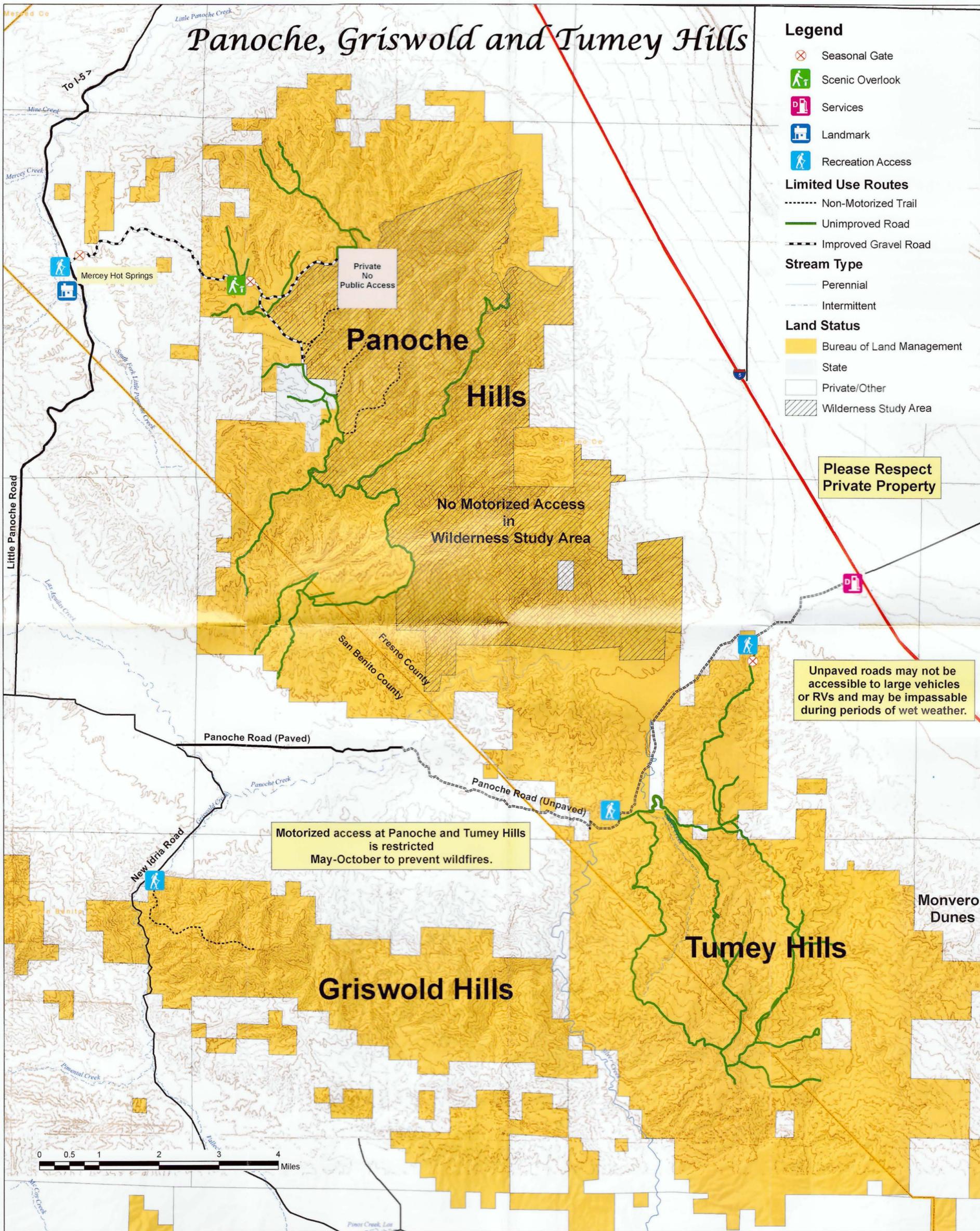
# Panoche Hills, Griswold Hills and Tumey Hills

BLM

Hollister Field Office



# Panoche, Griswold and Tumey Hills



## Legend

- Seasonal Gate
- Scenic Overlook
- Services
- Landmark
- Recreation Access

## Limited Use Routes

- Non-Motorized Trail
- Unimproved Road
- Improved Gravel Road

## Stream Type

- Perennial
- Intermittent

## Land Status

- Bureau of Land Management
- State
- Private/Other
- Wilderness Study Area

Please Respect Private Property

Unpaved roads may not be accessible to large vehicles or RVs and may be impassable during periods of wet weather.

Motorized access at Panoche and Tumey Hills is restricted May-October to prevent wildfires.

## THE TEN ESSENTIALS

Packing these items whenever you venture into the backcountry, even on day hikes or drives, is a good habit to acquire. On a routine trip you may only use a few of them. Yet you'll probably never fully appreciate the value of the Ten Essentials until you *really* need one of them.

1. Map
2. Compass
3. Sunglasses and Sunscreen
4. Extra Clothing
5. Headlamp/Flashlight
6. First Aid Supplies
7. Fire-starting Material
8. Matches
9. Knife
10. Extra Food & Water

## LEAVE NO TRACE ([www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org))



As more people use parks and recreation facilities, LEAVE NO TRACE® guidelines become even more important for outdoor visitors. Leave No Trace is a plan that helps people to be more concerned about their environment and to help them protect it for future generations. Leave No Trace applies in the front country as much as it does in the wilderness (backcountry).

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

## TREAD LIGHTLY ([www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org))



1. **Travel responsibly** on designated roads and trails or in permitted areas.
2. **Respect the rights of others** including private property owners and all recreational trail users, campers and others to allow them to enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed.
3. **Educate yourself** by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, planning for your trip, taking recreation skills classes, and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.
4. **Avoid sensitive areas** such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams, unless on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage.
5. **Do your part** by leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, restoring degraded areas, and joining a local enthusiast organization.

## SPECIAL REGULATIONS: FOSSILS

**Animal fossils:**— It is illegal to collect vertebrate fossils (remains of reptiles, mammals, fish, amphibians or birds) without a permit. Fossil shells or other invertebrate remains may be legally collected.

**Plant fossils:**— It is illegal to collect plant fossils of scientific interest (including fossilized leaves or needles, cones, flowers, seeds, and fossilized logs less than 6 inches in diameter) without a permit. Fossil wood, logs and log fragments less than 6 inches in diameter may be legally collected.

*Fossils may only be collected for personal use.*

## SPECIAL REGULATIONS: FIRE USE

A permit is required from the Hollister Field Office if you are planning to have a campfire. Permits are generally not issued during the dry season (summer).

## Restriction on Lead Ammunition

In order to prevent the accidental poisoning of California condors, lead ammunition had been banned for most kinds of hunting.

U.S. Bureau Of Land Management  
 Hollister Field Office  
 20 Hamilton Court  
 Hollister, CA 95023  
 (831) 630-5000  
[www.blm.gov/ca/hollister](http://www.blm.gov/ca/hollister)