Historic Biological Reports
Scan Control Sheet

County Project Number(s): TT-4409 - EIR

Report Type (check one):
- ❑ Initial Study
- ❑ Species Inventory/Survey
- ❑ Focused Study
- ❑ EIR
- ❑ Draft EIR
- ❑ EIS
- ❑ ND
- ❑ MND
- ❑ Other

Report Date (Month/Day/Year): Jan 13, 2005

Check if the following apply to the report:

- ❑ Wetland and/or aquatic habitat
- ❑ Within designated Coastal Zone
- ❑ Potential movement corridor for fish and/or wildlife

TT4409 COMPARISON ANALYSIS
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

General Biota

The following information was derived from the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR. Based on verification surveys conducted by Impact Sciences, Inc., descriptions of the existing conditions are similar to those described in the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR. This information is summarized below.

Tentative Tract 4409 occurs in steep hills with many areas of exposed bedrock and little soil cover. Consequently, the dominant vegetation types are chaparral and coastal sage scrub interspersed with small areas of non-native grassland. Oaks and several small areas of riparian woodlands are also present within and adjacent to the major drainages.

Chaparral on the site is composed of hard-leaved, generally sclerophytic shrubs. This vegetation varies from 4 to 8 feet in height and often forms such a complete canopy on north-facing slopes that an understory of forbs and grasses is absent. Chaparral is a fire-adapted community that is highly flammable during dry summers. Many of the dominant shrubs within this community are capable of stump sprouting after fires, and many of the forbs are fire-annuals (i.e., found only after recent fires). Except on poor soils and steep slopes, chaparral is probably a fire sub-climax community, replaced in time by oak woodland. If the natural fire cycle is interrupted, the habitat value of chaparral tends to degrade over a period of 25 to 40 years (Lawrence, G.E. 1966).

Mammals such as mule deer are known to use chaparral for foraging and shelter, along with coyote, bobcat and skunks. Many smaller animals, such as rabbits, dusky-footed woodrats (*Neotoma fuscipes*) and other rodents are plentiful. Resident birds include common bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) and western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*). Migrants common in the autumn months include white-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), golden-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), fox sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*), Audubon warbler (*Dendroica auduboni*), and American robin (*Turdus migratorius*). Amphibians do not commonly live in chaparral, except at places where moisture is continuously present. At such locations, Eschscholtz's salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzi*), California slender salamander (*Batrachoseps attenuatus*), and western toad (*Bufo boreas*) can be found. Reptiles are very abundant throughout the chaparral, but none are limited strictly to this community. The most common reptiles are the side-

blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), and western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*).

Coastal sage scrub is generally observed on south-facing slopes throughout Tract 4409. On the site, it generally integrates with chaparral. This native plant community is characterized by the predominance of sub-shrubs, 1 to 5 feet in height with semi-woody stems growing from a woody base. Many of the species in this community show special adaptations to prevailing climatic conditions such as winter rainfall and summer drought by being drought-deciduous, having grayish foliage with heavy pubescence on stems and leaves, or similar adaptations for arid conditions.

The coastal sage scrub community hosts a number and variety of animals, most of which are permanent residents. Amphibians include the California slender salamander and the western toad. Reptiles include the San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillii*), western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleuces*), common king snake (*Lampropeltis getulus*), and western rattlesnake. Resident bird species include the California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), and common bushtit. Coastal sage scrub provides the primary year-round hunting ground for many raptors that utilize adjacent grasslands during the spring. This plant community provides the shelter necessary for nesting or breeding habitats of many wildlife species.

Oak woodlands are generally situated on north-facing slopes within and along the major drainages. On the site, oak woodlands occur as closed to partly open canopy, dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees. Oak trees affect the microenvironment around them because their extensive shade produces lower temperatures than in the nearby chaparral and grassland communities.

Oak woodland is an important habitat area because it provides roosting and nesting sites for many birds, particularly raptors. Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), sparrow hawk (*Falco sparverius*), and sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) are common. The woodland also provides habitat for several species of woodpeckers including red-shafted flicker (*Colaptes cafer*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), Downey woodpecker (*Dendrócopos pubéscens*), and Nutall's woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*). Warblers and flycatchers are also common. Common amphibians found in sage scrub and chaparral communities, may also be found here, along with reptiles and mammals common to adjacent plant associations.

Riparian woodland in Tract 4409 consists of scattered hydrophytic trees, shrubs, and herbs (dependent on the stream flows) at limited locations along the intermittent drainage courses. Willows dominate this

woodland type. However, coast live oaks are common as well. Wildlife in the riparian woodlands is generally similar to animal assemblages that occur in the oak woodlands.

Non-native grasslands within Tract 4409 occur in small openings on upper slopes within the chaparral and coastal sage scrub community. These grasslands are generally composed of non-native introduced annuals and biennials, such as wild oats (*Avena* spp.) and bromes (*Bromus* spp.). However, small pockets of native bunchgrasses, such as deergrass (*Muehlenbergia rigens*) and giant wildrye (*Leymus condensatus*), along with native wildflowers like California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*) and red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*) do occur.

Grassland areas provide habitat for grazers and seedeaters. Animals that characterize this area include an array of mammals, such as mule deer and coyote, and small mammals such as the California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), Audubon's (desert) cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), and deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*). However, raptorial birds are the major dominant animals of the grassland. These birds play an important role in controlling rodent populations. Barn owls (*Tyto alba*) forage on pocket gophers, while red-tailed hawks prey on rabbits, ground squirrels, and snakes. Grasslands are a primary foraging ground for turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*) and white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*) as well.

Seed-eating bird species are also common constituents of grasslands. Species such as the western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) and various finches are probably more characteristic of grasslands than predatory birds. While several wildlife species are year-round residents of the grassland, this plant association provides wildlife habitat primarily during late winter and spring when the vegetation is tall.

Special-Status Species

Information regarding special-status species incorporated as part of the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR is dated. Updated special-status species data is provided below.

Special-status plants and animals that have a potential to occur on the project site are defined in **Table 1**. Special-status species associated with this update include state- and federally-listed Threatened or Endangered species, Federal and California Species of Concern, federal migratory non-game birds of management concern, state candidate species for listing as Threatened or Endangered, State Protected Species, California Native Plant Society (CNPS) listed species, and State Special-Status Animals for which

the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) monitors the status. Special-status habitats are federally designated critical habitat and those ranked by the CDFG as Rare and/or of High Priority for inventory.

Table 1
Special-Status Species

Common/Scientific Name	Federal/State Status	CDFG Status
Wildlife		
Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	None/None	
Coast horned lizard *Phrynosoma coronatum*	None/None	SC
Coastal Western whiptail *Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*	None/None	SC
Two striped garter snake *Thamnophis hammondii*	None/None	SC
Coastal California gnatcatcher *Polioptila californica californica*	Threatened/CSC	SC
Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps canescens*	None/None	SC
Plants		
Round -leaved filaree *California macrophyllum*	None/None	
Plummer's mariposa lily *Calochortus plummerae*	None/None	
Parry's spineflower *Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*	None/None	
Santa Susana tarplant *Deinandra minthornii*	None/Rare	
Blochman's dudleya *Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp. *blochmaniae*	None/None	
Santa Monica Mountains dudleya *Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *agourensis* *Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens* *Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia*	Threatened/None Threatened/Rare Threatened/None	
Conejo dudleya *Dudleya parva*	Threatened/None	
Conejo buckwheat *Eriogonum crocatum*	None/Rare	
Lyon's pentachaeta *Pentachaeta lyonii*	Endangered/ Endangered	

Source: California Department of Fish and Game, Natural Diversity Data Base, report dated 08/04.

This list of special-status plants and animals was based on computer printout reports from the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) (August 2004) for 10 USGS 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle

maps that include and surround the project site was reviewed. In addition, individuals from various

resource agencies, conservation organizations, academic institutions and biological museums that have specific expertise on the biological resources of the project site and surrounding area or specific survey protocols were contacted.[1]

Those Threatened or Endangered species (coastal California gnatcatcher and Lyon's pentachaeta) and special-status habitats (coast live oak woodland) that have a potential for occurrence within Tract 4409 that were not described in the Hidden Valley/Lake Sherwood Area Plan EIR are described below.

Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) – The preferred plant structure in gnatcatcher territories is described as low growing with moderate gaps in the coastal sage scrub canopy. California gnatcatcher generally avoids dense or high stands of sage scrub habitat and areas with steep slopes. Suitable sage scrub habitat for this species is present on the proposed project site. Systematic surveys for this sensitive bird species have not been previously conducted within Tract 4409. The nearest known populations for this species occur to the north of the project site in the Moorpark area. Impact Sciences, Inc. contacted Rick Farris of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (personal communication, September 25, 2003). Mr. Farris indicated that coastal California gnatcatcher has neither been observed, nor is it expected on or in the vicinity of the TT 4409 project site. Because the project site is outside of the known range of this species, California gnatcatchers are not expected to occur within the project site. For this reason, protocol surveys for this species were not determined to be warranted and were not conducted.

Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) – Lyon's pentachaeta is listed as Endangered by both the State and Federal agencies. Protection of this species is administered by both the CDFG and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This species is also included on the CNPS List 1B, plants Rare and Endangered in California and elsewhere. The current recorded range assumed the extant populations is concentrated in the Conejo Valley near Newbury Park, north to Simi Valley and east to the Santa Monica Mountains north of Malibu. There is also an isolated occurrence from Point Fermin, south of San Pedro. Lyon's pentachaeta is a small plant, less than 1-foot tall on average, with simple branched and very slender stems that terminate in flower heads resembling goldfields. As a member of the Asteraceae, or sunflower family, the flower heads contain yellow disk flowers and two rows of long yellow ray flowers. As the flower matures, the rays curl under forming a narrow ruffle around the disk.

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[1] Individuals contacted include Carl Wishner of Envicom, who has conducted previous biological surveys of the site and surrounding areas in Lake Sherwood, and Rick Farris, of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Ventura. In addition, Ventura County's biology consultant for this project, Duane Vander Pluym, D.ESE of Rincon Consultants, also provided information regarding the biological resources of the site. Dr. Vander Pluym was involved in the preparation of the biological resource analysis in the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR.

The general habitat, as described in the CNDDB, for Lyon's pentachaeta is considered chaparral, and valley and foothill grasslands. More specifically, the microhabitat is described as edges of clearings in chaparral, usually at the ecotone between grassland and chaparral communities or along the edges of firebreaks. This condition occurs within Tract 4409. The majority of CNDDB reports that included ecological notes showed a trend for occurrence in rocky volcanic and clay soils (primarily the Hambright Series) in disturbed areas. All recorded occurrences have been within 20 miles of the coast. This coincides with the 1993 *Jepson Manual*'s coastal habitat designation. Elevations of occurrences range from 100 to 2,020 feet. There does not appear to be a consistent trend in vegetative associates across the range, with the exception of sparse native and non-native grasses and wildflowers. A dense cover of non-native grasses tends to exclude Lyon's pentachaeta from openings in dense shrub cover.

Coast Live Oak Woodland – This habitat type is apparently secure throughout the state, although factors exist to cause some concern. Oak woodlands provide habitat for breeding, foraging, or over-wintering for over 300 species of vertebrates in California (Block, Morrison, and Verner 1990). The coast live oak woodland on the project site is mature and primarily located on north-facing slopes. Individual trees are relatively healthy. However, there is a distinct lack of recruitment (reproduction) among the on-site oak woodland as few young seedlings or sapling trees occur. This condition is common in the Southern California area and is generally attributed to years of livestock grazing and other disturbance related activities.

Jurisdictional Delineation of Waters of the U.S. and Streambeds

A jurisdictional delineation report prepared by Impact Sciences, Inc. delineates the extent of "waters of the United States," including wetlands, under federal jurisdiction and "streambeds" under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Game within Tentative Tract 4409. Field investigations conducted on March and April 2003 determined that portions of the site qualify as "wetlands" and "waters of the United States" per Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act and 33 Code of Federal Regulations 328, and as "streambeds" per Section 1603 of the Fish and Game Code of California. This delineation has been reviewed and approved by both the ACOE and CDFG. Permits from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the CDFG and certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) are required for impacts to wetlands, waters of the United States, and streambeds within the project site.

Because of difficult access to the riparian corridor and tributaries due to steep slopes, along dense chaparral vegetation, the delineation was conducted by examining all stream corridors that were

accessible, recording GPS location data, width and depth of the stream, and vegetation, while using recent color aerial photos and the topographic map for the area. Prior to conducting the delineation using this methodology the ACOE and CDFG were contacted for authorization and suggestions for this methodology. The delineation denoted the width of each reach of the drainages.

Characteristics of the jurisdictional drainages included ephemeral, erosion channels, with essentially vertical cut banks that flowed under the canopies of dense chaparral, down relatively steep slopes. No riparian vegetation was present in the upper to mid drainages, but as the slopes lessened in the lower parts of the drainage, a few streams developed a small amount of riparian vegetation. Because of channel morphology, ACOE and CDFG boundaries were determined to be essentially the same in most stream reaches, except where slopes lessened and where vertical banks did not occur or where riparian vegetation was present. In these instances the delineation followed the individual agencies' delineation protocols.

The site contains 31 ephemeral and intermittent streams and 1 prominent wetland at the headwaters of 1 short stream. Most of the hydrology is from rainfall; however, infiltration is rapid in the volcanic soils, so that a few streams are intermittent. Within the proposed development area there was little water in the streams; however, there was drainage from the one wetland into the outflow stream, which quickly infiltrates into the soil. The jurisdictional delineation determined that the site contains 3.88 acres of Waters of the United States subject to ACOE jurisdiction and 4.46 of streambed and riparian corridors subject to CDFG jurisdiction.

According to the Ventura Area soil survey, eight types of soil occur on Tentative Tract 4409. No soil types mapped as occurring on the site are classified as hydric by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The vegetation has been discussed earlier in this report. Very few areas on Tentative Tract 4409 have areas with hydrophytic vegetation.

The site contains a total of 31 streams or portions of streams with one stream having a wetland at its headwater area. The streams are classified as riverine, intermittent system, while the one wetland is a palustrine emergent system by the Cowardin classification system (Cowardin, 1979). All streams on the site are also classified as riverine by the HGM system, with the one wetland being a slope wetland. This classification is for a functional assessment methodology (Brinson, 1993).

"Waters of the United States" defined as those areas below ordinary high water, are under the jurisdiction of the ACOE. All the streams and riparian vegetation are regulated by the California Department of Fish and Game. CDFG riparian corridors include the streambed and channel, extending to the top of the bank, at a minimum, and to the outward extent of the outer edge of the canopy of riparian vegetation, if a riparian canopy is present.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Approved 49-Lot Configuration

As described in the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR, development of the proposed 49-lot project would result in the direct removal and alteration of natural vegetation on the site. This removal of vegetation/wildlife habitat would result in an incremental decrease of species abundance on and adjacent to Tract 4409. There would be a decrease in the number of species dependent on natural habitats and corresponding increases in species adapted to urban areas. Vegetation types affected by project implementation primarily include chaparral and coastal sage scrub. Smaller areas of coast live oak woodland, riparian woodland and non-native grassland would also occur as a result of project implementation.

Construction activities associated with Tract 4409, such as vegetation clearing and grading, will also result in the direct mortality of small animals, too small and/or slow to abandon the area. Additional mobile species, such as birds and larger mammals, as well as individuals near the margins of the development area would be temporarily displaced from their territories. Survival of these individuals will depend upon their success in establishing new territories (away from the construction area) and the rate of recovery of suitable vegetation on the project site. Individuals losing all or most of their territories are generally unable to establish a new territory in adjacent undeveloped areas and will most likely perish; therefore, populations of animals having small home ranges and/or limited mobility, particularly small mammals and reptiles, would likely be eliminated from construction activities. The increase in construction related activity is likely to cause many species to abandon the area permanently or until construction is complete.

Direct loss of habitat due to vegetation removal is the most significant direct impact to wildlife. Loss of habitat often results in animals relocating to nearby areas of similar habitat, which may already be at the carrying capacity for that species. Overcrowding may result in additional stress to the local population, a factor that becomes critical and can create impacts on the survival of certain species. In the proposed project area, those species most affected include raptors and large predators.

Areas of particular value to wildlife are the oak woodlands and rocky outcrops. The impact of the loss of mature trees is related to the scarcity of such arboreal habitats where the predominant cover types average 2 to 4 feet in height with scattered or small clusters of large oaks. Large trees are especially important to raptors that utilize them for nesting, cover, and foraging perches. A wide variety of other birds, mammals, and insects also utilize the trees for feeding, nesting, and cover. Rocky outcrops are used by a variety of species for cover and by plants as specialized habitats.

Field investigations associated with the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan EIR indicated that seven listed species (**Table 1**) were observed or have a high potential of occurrence within or near Tract 4409.

Based on current information derived from the CNDDB, additional special-status species have the potential to occur in habitat that would be altered as part of implementation of Tract 4409 in the 49-lot configuration based on their habitat affinities and geographic range requirements. These species include: Monarch butterfly, Coast horned lizard, Coastal Western whiptail), Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*), Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophyllum*) Plummer's mariposa lily, Parry's spineflower, and Blochman's dudleya.

Impact Sciences, Inc. biologists' conducted focused plant surveys for all species defined in **Table 1**. Where feasible, representative populations known to occur in the vicinity of Tract 4409 were monitored for their blooming status to determine appropriate survey periods, including populations of Lyon's pentachaeta, which was found in the golf course area as described by Mr. Carl Wishner (Personal Communication, 2003). On-site surveys were conducted on April 15, 16, 23, 24, and on June 3, 4, 9, and 10, 2003. As part of these investigations, 21 locations within Tract 4409 were identified and investigated as potentially suitable habitat for special-status plants. To verify the presence or absence of special-status plants, these areas were traversed on foot utilizing defined transects for opportunity based microhabitat conditions. Transect surveys were conducted on April 15, 16, 23, and 24, and again on June 3, 4, 9, and 10, 2003. During these surveys, observations were also made of wildlife present on the site. No sensitive wildlife species were observed during these surveys.

The results of our investigations indicated that one special-status plant was observed on the site. An individual Conejo buckwheat plant was observed in the central portion of the project site, in an area not proposed for development. As defined on **Table 1**, this plant is designated by the state as being Rare. Redshank chaparral occurs commonly in several locations on the project site. This habitat is designated as sensitive by the CNPS and is considered a high inventory priority due to rarity and/or threat. Much of

this habitat type would not be affected due to project construction or operation. However, portions of this habitat type would be impacted as the grading plan is currently configured.

An un-identifiable Dudleya species was located in an area west of existing Lot 144 in Tract 4191-3 by Mr. Carl Wishner (Personal Communication, 2003). This plant is considered to be locally Rare by the state, given its unknown taxonomic status. Because no development is planned for this area, no direct significant impacts to the undescribed taxa will occur.

Although not observed, Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow has the potential to occur on the project site. This species is most abundant in generally steep, rocky areas within coastal sage scrub and chaparral. It also occurs within areas containing scattered grasses, particularly previously burned areas. Geographic distribution includes coastal Southern California, from Santa Barbara County extending south into Baja, California. Although this species was not directly observed during the biological surveys, suitable habitat is present on site for this species and it is known to occur in similar habitat in the region. Therefore, a potential exists for this species to occur in the coastal sage scrub habitat on the project site. However, the loss of coastal sage scrub as nesting and forage habitat for this species, though adverse, is not considered significant. The site has been degraded by both historic and current human disturbances, resulting in a reduction in the diversity of plant species present while reducing the forage and nesting potential of the Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow when compared with less disturbed habitat. Large amounts of protected and more suitable habitat occur in the immediate site vicinity to the north, west and east.

Proposed 75-Lot Configuration

As currently proposed (December 2004), modifications to Tentative Tract 4409 would increase the number of buildable lots from the 49 lots previously approved to 75 lots. The proposed changes to the tentative tract map would result in a minor increase in the size of the area to be graded and related impacts to the natural vegetation on the site. In order to compare the impacts of the 75-lot configuration to the 49-lot configuration, both maps and the map of onsite vegetation communities was digitized using an using an orthorectified aerial and the grading limit line was exported from a CAD file provided by The Keith Companies for use in GIS. Using ArcMap software, all vegetation types within the proposed grading limit were individually queried and clipped to calculate total acres for both the 49-lot and 75-lot configurations and then compared.

Calculations indicate that development of an additional 26 lots would increase the size of the area to be graded from 88 acres for the 49-lot configuration to 104.3 acres for the proposed 75-lot configuration, resulting in the grading area increasing by 16.3 acres.

The other portions of the 640 acres included in Tentative Tract 4409 not planned for development would remain as natural open space. With the 49-lot configuration, approximately 552 acres would remain as natural open space, and with the proposed 75-lot configuration, approximately 536 acres would remain as open space.

Although the size of the area to be graded would incrementally increase with the proposed 75-lot configuration, the revised development plan has been designed to mimic the existing plan already approved in terms of the locations where grading and development are proposed. Therefore, development of the proposed 75-lot project would result in similar direct and indirect impacts to the 49-lot project already approved. Vegetation types affected by implementation of the 75-lot plan primarily include chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and coastal sage scrub. On-site mapping indicates that with the 49-lot plan, 65.62 acres of coastal sage scrub/chaparral and 5.80 acres of oak woodland would be impacted. As proposed, the 75-lot configuration would impact approximately 84.3 acres of coastal sage scrub/chaparral (18.62 additional acres) and 5.67 acres of coast live oak woodland (0.13 less acres than the 49-lot project). Impacts to willow riparian vegetation present in onsite drainages would remain essentially unchanged with the 75-lot configuration.

In addition to the direct impacts from grading, the creations and maintenance of fuel modification zones in accordance with the current County of Ventura standards would also result in impacts to vegetation on the site. The County currently requires the clearance of vegetation for a distance of 100 feet from structures and the thinning of vegetation at a distance of 100 feet to 200 feet from structures. The fuel modification zone for the 49-lot design would require the clearance of approximately 21.1 acres of vegetation within 100 feet of structures. An additional 39.7 acres of vegetation within 200 feet of structures would need to be thinned. A total of 60.8 acres would be affected by fuel modification within 200 feet of structures.

Fuel modification impacts would be substantially reduced with the proposed 75-lot design because several clusters of lots would be created with reduced frontage along native vegetation areas than the 49-lot design. With the 75-lot design, 9.7 acres of vegetation would need to be cleared within 100 feet of structures, and an additional 13.2 acres within 200 feet of structures would be thinned. A total of 22.9 acres would be affected by fuel modification within 200 feet of structures with the 75-lot design.

The proposed changes to the project would not impact any special-status species present on the site, based on the likelihood of the occurrence of these species on the site and the biological surveys completed. While not observed on the site, if southern California rufous-crowned sparrows are present, an impact to

this species may potentially occur. Special-status habitats that would be impacted by development of the site by either plan would include coast live oak woodland and redshank chaparral. As discussed above, the proposed 75-lot configuration would reduce impacts to the coast live oak woodlands present on the site.

"Waters of the U.S." constitute 3.88 acres of the site, as verified by the ACOE, while "streambeds" with only a few exceptions are consistent with the "waters," because of the vertical banks of the drainages, constitutes 4.46 acres. The 49-lot map would impact 0.37 acres of CDFG/ACOE jurisdictional areas. The proposed 75-lot map would marginally increase the impact to CDFG/ACOE jurisdictional areas by 0.07 acres to 0.44 acres. Impacts to stream lengths from the 75-lot map vary from 5 to 1,393 feet.

In addition, the current 75-lot proposal incorporates construction management practices and a native revegetation program as a part of the project designed to reduce the effect of the project on the natural resources present on the site. Specifically, temporary fencing will be installed and maintained on the northern edge of all areas proposed for grading to eliminate the potential for grading activities to indirectly impact the surrounding area. Surveys will also be conducted prior to construction to ensure that no active bird nests are present in the construction area. If active nests are found, an appropriate protection zone will be established around each nest to protect it until the nest is vacated. In addition, all slopes graded or created by grading will be revegetated with native plant species as described in the attachment to this project description. The proposed 75-lot tentative tract map also includes a deed restriction to preserve 145 acres of chaparral/riparian vegetation within Tract 4409 as identified in the Preservation Plan prepared by Envicom Corporation dated November 30, 2004. These features were not included as mitigation measures or conditions on the approved 49-lot plan and will further reduce the impacts of the 75-lot plan in comparison to the 49-lot plan.

Summary

The proposed modifications to Tract 4409 would add 26 lots to the 49 lots that are already approved. The area to be graded within the 640-acre area addressed by Tract 4409 would increase in area from 88 acres to 104.3 acres. There would be no increase in the severity of impacts to either sensitive species or special status habitats present within the 640-acre site. The primary change would be an 18.68 increase in impacts to the coastal sage scrub/chaparral vegetation present on the site from grading to create the proposed lots. As a result of the configuration of the proposed lots, impacts from fuel modification would be reduced with the 75-lot design. When the direct impacts from grading the area proposed for development and the fuel modifications impacts are considered together, the proposed 75-lot deign would result in a slight reduction in impacts to native vegetation on the site when compared to the 49-lot design.

In addition, the current 75-lot proposal incorporates construction management practices, a native revegetation program and a proposed deed restriction to preserve 145 acres of chaparral/riparian vegetation on the site as a part of the project that will reduce the impact of the 75-lot plan in comparison to the approved 49-lot plan. The 75-lot plan would not result in a substantial increase of direct or indirect impacts to special-status species present within the 640-acre site. The proposed modification to Tract 4409 would meet but not exceed the 630-lot limit defined as part of the Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley Area Plan. Overall, the proposed 75-lot plan would not result in any new significant impacts to the common or special status biological resources present on the site or a substantial increase in the severity of the impacts to these resources that would result from the approved 49-lot plan.

SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD ANALYSIS

Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines defines specific thresholds of significance for each technical topic evaluated as part of the Initial Study and, if necessary, as part of the environmental review process. Relevant criteria are defined below, followed by an analysis that is based on the information provided above.

Threshold: To an Endangered, Threatened, or Rare species a significant impact would occur if a project would directly or indirectly (1) reduce a species population; (2) reduce species habitat; or (3) restrict reproductive capacity.

Analysis: Although not observed, seven listed plant or animal species have the potential to occur on the project site given their habitat affinity and/or geographic range. These species include: Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia* and ssp. *marscens*), Conejo dudleya, Conejo buckwheat, Santa Susana tarplant, Lyon's pentachaeta, coastal California gnatcatcher. These species generally occur in rocky outcrops, the ecotone between rock outcrops and coastal sage scrub, and coastal sage scrub vegetation. Each of these vegetation types or microhabitat is present within Tract 4409.

Impact Sciences biologists' familiar with the special-status plants identified above conducted on-site surveys on April 15, 16, 18, 23, and 24. Additional field investigations were conducted June 3, 4, 9, 19, and 11. The entire site was systematically surveyed by walking a series of replicated transects. In addition, in areas/habitats that were identified as having a high potential for occurrence of special-status plants, such areas were intensely surveyed, either through the use of parallel transects or meandering walkover investigations. During these surveys, observations were also made of wildlife present on the site. No sensitive wildlife species were observed during these surveys.

The results of these investigations indicated that one special-status plant occurs on the project site. An individual Conejo buckwheat plant was observed in the central portion of the project site, in an area not proposed for development. As defined on **Table 1**, this plant is designated by the state as Rare.

Similar to the approved 49-lot project, the 75-lot project would result in direct impacts to four special-status habitats. *Special-status habitats include coast live oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, redshank* chaparral, and willow riparian. These habitats are designated as Sensitive by the CNDDB and CNPS, and are considered a high priority due to rarity and/or threat. These habitat types would not be significantly affected from operational activities; however, portions of these habitat types would be impacted with the grading plan as currently configured. As discussed above, the proposed 75-lot plan would not increase the impacts to these plant communities and would result in a decrease in impacts to the oak woodland present on the site.

Impacts to the on-site "waters" and "streambeds" from the current 75-lot design amount to less than one-half acre (.044 acres) and would not be substantially greater than the impacts to these features from the 49-lot design.

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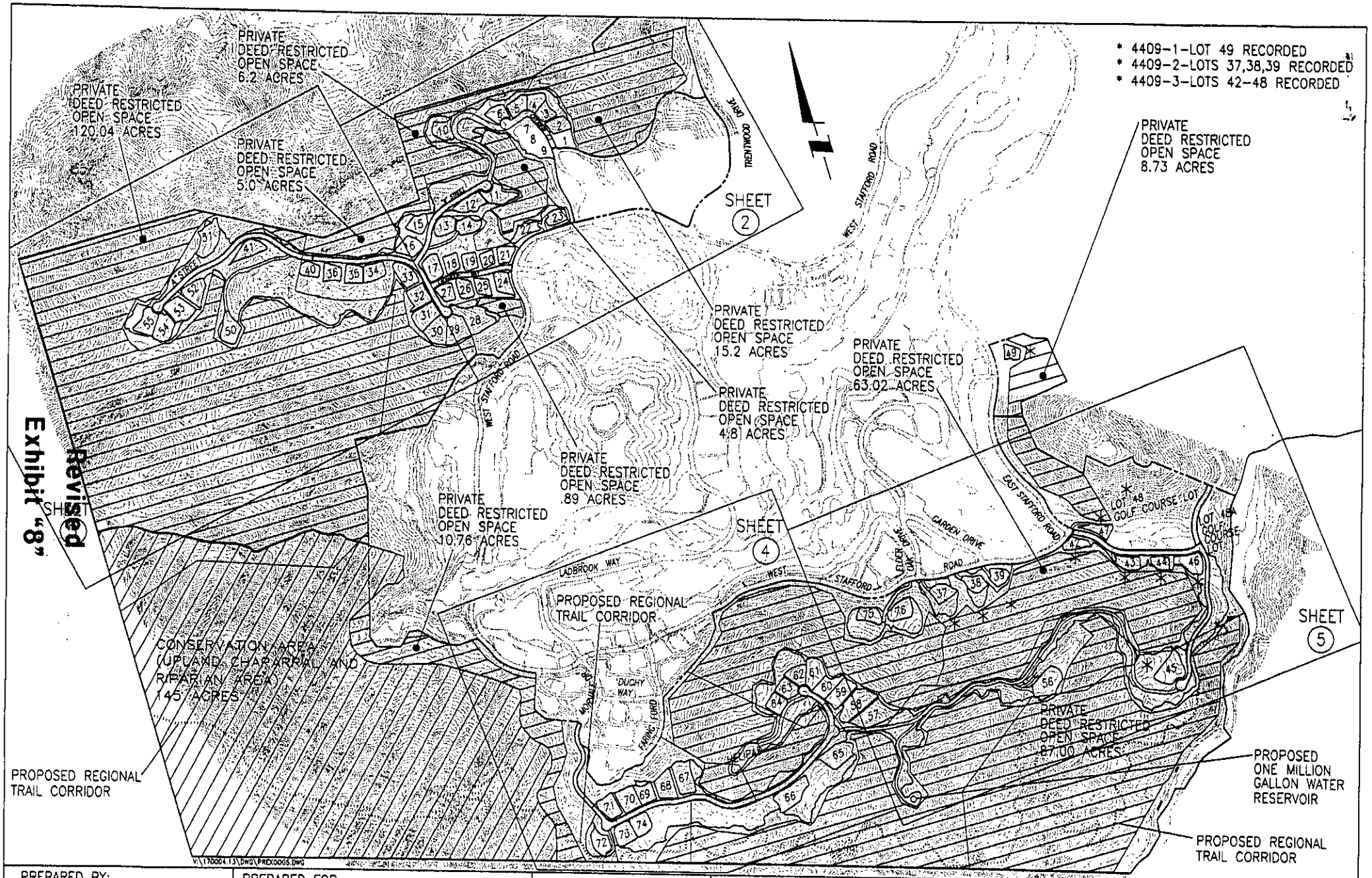

PREPARED BY:	PREPARED FOR:	REVISION DATE:	
TKC 4195 E. THOUSAND OAKS BLVD. STE. 250 THOUSAND OAKS, CA 91362 805-495-6522	SDC 300 WEST POTRERO ROAD THOUSAND OAKS, CA 91361 805-495-6522	1-14-2005	GPA-05-01, ZONE CHANGE Z-2953 TENT. MAP NO. TT-4409, CUP 4635 & RPD-1952