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PROJECT REFERENCE NO.: CCC-9908 (PM-5231)

PROJECT PLANNER: Rita Graham

DATE: 23 August 1999 (site visit conducted on 13 August 1999; 10:00 AM)

PROJECT BIOLOGIST: Cher Wellonen and David Magney, David Magney Environmental Consulting

PROJECT LOCATION: La Cam Road, Newbury Park; Rancho El Conejo; Newbury Park Quadrangle, S1/2, SEC13, T1N, R20W; Latitude-N 34° 10.134', Longitude-W118° 55.449'.

PROJECT ADDRESS: (None provided) on short private road (or long driveway) heading south at the eastern end of La Cam Road.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: To legalize a 1.03 acre lot as a Single-Family Dwelling.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The project site occurs on a steep (3:1) north-facing slope, in a highland area of Newbury Park. The site consists of dry, shallow, rocky/sandy soils, and occurs at an elevation of approximately 1,100 feet above mean sea level. The site is just south of (and more upslope from) three existing large homes, while a drainage with Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland exists just to the north of the site. The predominant vegetation type onsite is Mixed Ceanothus Chaparral, with Coastal Sage Scrub species in the chaparral openings and as an understory, and annual and perennial grasses/forbs forming the ground layer.

Due to the unseasonal timing of the field survey, few wildlife species and few annual herbs were observed onsite. However, the field survey revealed the presence of Common Raven, Costa's Humming Bird, Mockingbird, Red-tailed Hawk (1 mature & 1 juvenile), Scrub Jay (several), Western Fence Lizard, Coyote (scat), and several rodent burrows.

The chaparral and scrub plant communities located onsite consists primarily of woody, small to large shrubs that are characteristically fire-adapted. The native Mixed Ceanothus Chaparral plant species observed within the shrubland habitat onsite include: Chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum), Bigpod Ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *megacarpus*), Greenbark Ceanothus (*C. spinosus*), Lauralleaf Sumac (*Malosma laurina*), Hollyleaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*), Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia* [sapling]), and Chaparral Currant (*Ribes malvaceum*).

The native Coastal Sage Scrub plant species observed within the shrubland habitat onsite include: California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), Coyote Brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *polifolium*), Sawtooth Goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), Prickly Phlox (*Leptodactylon californicum* ssp. *californicum*), Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), Bush Monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), Black Sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and emergent Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). Nonnative scrub plants observed are Hottentot Fig (*Carpobrotus* sp.) and Tree Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*).

The grasses contributing to the ground layer growing under the shrubland habitat onsite include: Slender Oats (*Avena barbata*), Coast Melic Grass (*Melica imperfecta*), Purple Needlegrass (*Nassella pulchra*), Smilo Grass (*Piptatherum miliaceum*), and Slender Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*). The native annual and perennial herbs contributing to the ground layer include: Morning-glory (*Calystegia macrostegia*), Peak Rush-rose (*Helianthemum scoparium*), Green Everlasting (*Gnaphalium californicum*), White Everlasting (*G. canescens*), Telegraph Weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), Cudweed Aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia*), and Cliff Aster (*Malacothrix saxatilis*). The introduced ground layer species onsite are Black Mustard (*Brassica nigra*), Tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), Summer Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and Windmill Pink (*Silene gallica*).

Several special-status plant species are known to occur in the region of the project site, and the site contains suitable habitat for several taxa. A search of the California Natural Diversity Data Base records for the area indicate that several special-status species are known to occur in the area in similar habitats present onsite. The special-status plant species that are known to occur in the region and have potential to occur at the project site include: *Antirrhinum ovatum, Acanthomintha obovata* ssp. *cordata, Astragalus brauntonii, Baccharis plummerae* ssp. *plummerae, Calandrinia breweri, Calochortus catalinae, C. plummerae, Chorizanthe procumbens, Convolvulus simulans, Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *parva, D. blochmaniae* ssp. *blochmaniae, D. cymosa* ssp. *marcescens, D. cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia, Eriogonum crocatum, Eriophyllum jepsonii, Galium cliftonsmithii, Hemizonia minthornii, Juglans californica* ssp. *californica, Pentachaeta lyonii, Perideridia pringlei,* and *Senecio aphanactis.*

The special-status wildlife species that are known to occur in the region and that have the potential to occur at the project site include: California Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*), Coastal Western Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*), and Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*).

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

	Yes	Maybe	No	Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures
IV. PLANT LIFE. *Will the proposal result in.*				
a) Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X	No trees would be removed, but all shrubland vegetation would be cleared; however, no adverse impact to the biodiversity of the region is expected.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of plants?		X		Although no special-status species were observed, sensitive wildlife species may frequent the area, and the site has habitat suitable for several sensitive plant species. Seasonal field surveys are required to determine the absence of special-status plant and wildlife species.
c) Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?		X		Development of the property will likely result in invasive exotic plant species introduction into the area, especially if those species are ornamental landscape plantings. Species of concern are invasive-exotic taxa (invade natural communities and compete with native plants) that eventually adversely affect native wildlife. Tree Tobacco, Pepper Tree, and Fig already occur onsite, and development would likely result in a significant expansion of these (and other) invasive exotic plant species into adjacent areas as more disturbance occurs.
d) Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?			X	The proposed project would not reduce the acreage of any agricultural crop. The project site is currently used as natural habitat.
V. ANIMAL LIFE. *Will the proposal result in.*				
a) Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds; land animals, including reptiles; fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, or insects)?		X		The proposed project may change wildlife species diversity or numbers, because the project may reduce the land value as foraging habitat for mammalian predators and raptors. Furthermore, incremental loss of natural habitat will decrease the amount of habitat available to wildlife species for foraging, nesting, and resting.

	Yes	Maybe	No	Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of animals?		X		Coastal Sage Scrub habitat is present onsite; which is suitable habitat for the California Gnatcatcher and San Diego Desert Woodrat.
c) Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?			X	The proposed project is not expected to result in the introduction of new animal species; however, domestic pets will likely encounter predators, and they will reduce wildlife habitat quality in the immediate area. No barriers to migration or movement by wildlife is evident.
d) Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?		X		The area's value for foraging mammalian predators and raptors will deteriorate. This impact is not considered significant in terms of the species involved, or of the significance definitions addressed in CEQA; however, the impact is regionally cumulative, and may contribute to regional species extirpation, particularly for large mammals such as Black Bear and Mountain Lion.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

Developing the land onsite would involve extensive grading up a steep slope supporting Coastal Sage Scrub and Mixed Ceanothus Chaparral plant communities. This will result in the loss of important native shrubland vegetation and wildlife habitat for a building-pad, landscaping, fire-hazard fuel clearance and modification, and access. Long-term activities associated with the site development, such as additional habitat clearing for fire safety and landscaping practices that may introduce invasive-exotic species, would negatively impact native wildlife and vegetation. The significance of these impacts to wildlife is unknown. Significant erosion control measures will likely need to be implemented on such a steep hillside.

A drainage with Coast Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia) Riparian Woodland exists just north of the site, and although it is predominantly out of the site's development lines, this drainage should be fenced off to avoid any impacts from large construction equipment.

Several special-status plant and animal species have potential to occur at the project site because chaparral and coastal scrub communities are their optimal habitats. Seasonal surveys should be conducted to determine if the site contains any special-status species prior to recordation of the lot split. Botanical surveys should be conducted by qualified botanists during spring (March to May) and mid- to late-summer (July to September). Lichen surveys may be conducted at any time of the year and should be performed by qualified lichenologists familiar with the region's lichen flora.

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT:

Findings	Yes	Maybe	No
a. Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of major periods of California's history or prehistory?		X	
b. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?			X
c. Does the project have environmental effects which are individually limited but are cumulatively considerable?		X	
d. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?			X
Alternatives to the Proposed Action. Does the project require the discussion and evaluation of a range of reasonable alternatives which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project?			X

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYST:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find the proposed project will NOT have a significant adverse environmental effect, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

X I find that although the proposed project could have a significant adverse environmental effect, there would not be a significant effect in this case if the mitigation measures described herein are included in the project, A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant adverse environmental effect, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT should be prepared.

Seasonal field surveys for special-status plant and wildlife species need to be conducted before a complete impact assessment can be made. In the absence of these seasonal field surveys, we must assume the special-status species are present onsite, in suitable habitat, and that impacts to that habitat would be considered a significant impact. Special-status wildlife species surveys, for such species as California Gnatcatcher, should be conducted using methods consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protocols, and all wildlife surveys should be conducted by qualified wildlife biologists. Note: since the California Gnatcatcher is a Federally listed species, surveys for this species must be conducted under a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Prior to any work performed within 100 feet of the Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland habitat, protective fencing should be installed to prevent accidental encroachment into this sensitive habitat area.

Use of invasive exotic plants in landscaping onsite should be prohibited. A detailed list and description of invasive exotic plants can be found on the California Native Plant Society's webpage - http://www.calpoly.edu/~dchippin/exotic.html.

Signature(s)

31 AUGUST 1999
Date

Cher Wellonen & David L. Magney
Initial Study Preparers