California Environmental Quality Act Environmental Checklist Form
Biological Resources
County of Ventura, Planning Division

DMEC

PROJECT REFERENCE NO.: Gil Michaels, CUP-5016

PROJECT PLANNER: Carl Morehouse

DATE: 24 December 1997 (site visit conducted on 16 December 1997)

PROJECT BIOLOGIST: David L. Magney, David Magney Environmental Consulting

PROJECT LOCATION: 614 West Potrero Road, Hidden Valley, Santa Monica Mountains; Lat. 34°08'48"N Long. 118°53'34"W, in corral area east of driveway to stable house.

PROJECT ADDRESS: 614 West Potrero Road, Hidden Valley, CA 91361

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: Erection of a 19,000 sq. ft. agricultural structure to cover a horse riding arena and creation of a second, uncovered riding arena. A decomposed granite "driveway" will be installed at the south end of the corral area, nearest the stable house, leading to the covered arena.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The project site occurs on a gently sloping (northward) lowland area of Hidden Valley, on the south side of West Potrero Road. The vegetation consists of Ruderal Grassland/Oak Savannah. The Ruderal Grassland consists of nearly all nonnative annual grasses and herbs, including: Amaranth (*Amaranthus* sp.), Australian Saltbush (*Atriplex semibaccata*), Lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*), Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), Summer Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), Cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*), Narrowleaf Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Annual Blue Grass (*Poa annua*), Curly Dock (*Rumex crispus*), Sow Thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), and a clover (*Trifolium* sp.). One native grass, California Brome (*Bromus carinatus*), was present in small numbers.

The Oak Savannah consists of two species of oaks, Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*). A total of 14 oak trees are present onsite, 4 Coast Live Oaks and 10 Valley Oaks. Oak trees are considered sensitive biological resources to the County of Ventura, as well as the California Native Plant Society; however, neither species is considered rare. The oak trees had several species of crustose lichens growing on their trunks and branches.

Several special-status plant species are known to occur in the region of the project site (i.e., *Astragalus brauntonii, Baccharis plummerae* ssp. *plummerae, Calochortus catalinae, Calochortus plummerae, Dichondra occidentalis, Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *parva, Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp. *blochmaniae, Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens, Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia, Galium cliftonsmithii, Juglans californica* ssp. *californica, Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri, Lepechinia fragrans,* and *Pentachaeta lyonii*), however, habitat for these special-status vascular plant species is not present at the project site.

No wildlife were observed onsite; however, several birds and mammals are expected onsite (at least occasionally), including: Virginia Opossum, Striped Skunk, Raccoon, Deer Mouse, Coyote, Bobcat, several species of bats, Acorn Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Northern Flicker, Scrub Jay, Mockingbird, Brewer Blackbird, American Crow, and others. Habitat for special-status animal species is not present at the project site, except as foraging habitat for one or more species of bats.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

	Yes	Maybe	No	Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures
IV. PLANT LIFE. *Will the proposal result in*				ONE OAK
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, only weedy nonnative grasses and herbs will be displaced. No adverse impact expected.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of plants?		X		No rare or endangered species of plants present or would be affected by proposed project; however, several mature Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) are present at the project site that could be adversely affected by the proposed project as a result in changes to existing grade, runoff patterns, and from soil compaction. Adverse impacts to oak trees can be mitigated by implementing the recommendations described in the attached additional comments.
c) Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?			X	The proposed project is not expected to result in introduction of new plant species into the area, or create a barrier to normal replenishment of existing species, except it would prevent recruitment of oak seedlings in the proposed riding arenas.
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 for horse pasture.
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 would not change the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals in the Hidden Valley area.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of animals?			X	The proposed project is not expected to result in any reductions of unique, rare, or endangered species of animals.
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 species of animals, or result in a barrier to migration or movement of animals.
d) Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?			X	The proposed project is not expected to deteriorate existing fish or wildlife habitat.

Additional comments or explanations

IV. b. Work in the form of grading and filling will occur within the driplines of 10 mature oak trees, and minor trimming of a few low branches, as indicated on the Grading Plan prepared Jensen Design and Survey of Ventura, California, dated 24 November 1997, and described in detail by Paul Rogers, Consulting Arborist, Poly Associates, dated 4 December 1997. Rogers indicates that the work proposed under or to these trees will not adversely affect 4 of the 14 trees, and that work within the dripline of only four oaks could have a significant adverse impact. One Coast Live Oak will be transplanted from the covered arena area to elsewhere onsite, and three trees will require pruning of their root systems when constructing the foundation for the roof footings. This impact could be mitigated to a less than significant level by implementing the following measures, as summarized from Rogers' report:

REQUIRES A COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT FOR MONITORING

and roots

1. Obtain a tree permit from the County of Ventura to transplant the one Coast Live Oak tree, identified as Tree #14 by Rogers, and to prune the branches of the other trees. The loss of this tree would be considered a significant impact; however, successful transplantation should fully mitigate this impact. If this tree dies within five (5) years of transplanting, ten (10) Coast Live Oak saplings, grown from acorns collected from within Hidden Valley, shall be planted and survive for at least five (5) years as mitigation.

REPLACEMENT PER ORD. 3876 - §107-25.9 (OFFSETS ARE DISCUSSED IN TREE PROTECTION GUIDELINES)

2. Construct temporary fences around all oak trees within 50 feet of the work area.

fenced and These areas shall be defined on

3. Minimize work, grading, or filling within the dripline of oak trees to the greatest extent practicable.

where disturbance is proposed a 5'-0" high construction fence must be erected prior to any site development

4. Cut all roots within the work areas of the tree oak trees' driplines with hand tools only.

5. Keep all heavy equipment away from the oak trees driplines, except for those areas where grading is required, and then minimize earth compaction to the greatest extent practicable.

   Use hand tools to dig all holes for foundation footings that occur within the dripline of each of the oak trees. If roots greater than 2 inches in diameter are encountered, they may be cut with hand saws only. Immediately thereafter, the exposed soil wall and root area must be covered with plastic to prevent the roots from drying out, and shall be left in place until all work has been completed and the holes filled.

OK 7. A qualified arborist shall monitor all construction, transplantation, and pruning activities affecting the onsite oak trees. The arborist shall submit a final report to the County of Ventura Planning Division describing the results of the monitoring.

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT

	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 by 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.

Signature

26 December 1997
Date

David L. Magney
Initial Study Preparer