

COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: January 14, 1998
Requestor: Paul Merrett
Project: Oak Park Plaza PD-1714

Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification: County personnel had observed grading of wetland vegetation.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	S	U	N	LS	S	U
a. endangered, threatened, or rare species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. wetland habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. coastal habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. migration corridors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. locally important species/communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Degree of Effect Explanation

N= None

LS = Less than significant effect

S = Significant effect; MND or EIR required

U = Unknown; EIR required

B. DISCUSSION

The project concerns the development of a shopping center at a site that had been previously partially graded during development of the Oak Park Master Plan approximately 10 years ago. The site was visited on January 8 after discussions with the County. Wetland vegetation dominated by several arborescent yellow willows (*Salix lucida* ssp *lasiandra*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), and broad-leaved cattail (*Typha latifolia*) had been present within a drainage that paralleled the east property boundary of the site, but most of it had been removed during grading activities. Based on the observed slope of the land and aerial photographs (PW Ven 12-73, 1/8/96, 1"=2000'), the wetland vegetation occupied approximately 0.30 acre.

Wetland vegetation is a sensitive plant community and wildlife habitat and loss of wetlands is potentially significant from both a project and cumulative perspective. The wetland vegetation formerly at the site occupied a drainage swale that crossed the property from north to south. Runoff water from suburban development upstream of the site exits a storm drain at the north end of the site and flows through this swale to a 48-inch diameter storm drain at the south property line. Aerial photography taken after initial development of this area (PW Ven 7-72, 5/23/89, 1"=500') indicated that while this was potentially a natural swale, it lacked any wetland vegetation and no shrubs or trees were present. The Supplemental EIR for the Oak Park Community Plan (Tait & Associates, Inc., November 23, 1983, SCH#83042450) also

identified the vegetation at the project site as southern California annual grassland, subjected to sheep grazing and ORV use. Therefore, this wetland is not natural, but developed because of the increase in runoff water associated with suburban growth in the area and poor drainage control across the site. Given the small size of the wetland, its man-made nature, and lack of connectivity to other natural wetlands, its loss would be considered a less than significant effect.

Because the wetland is not located within a designated blue-line stream, a California Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Agreement is not required. In addition, a US Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 permit would probably not be required because the site is apparently not within their jurisdiction as waters of the United States. In any event, the small area (less than 1/3 acre) would allow the use of a Nationwide Permit if the site were determined to be under their jurisdiction.

Even though the wetland at the site is not natural, it still has the potential to harbor sensitive wildlife species. The site was checked for evidence of wildlife on January 8. The ponded and flowing water areas were observed to generally lack animals, with only a few exotic freshwater snails observed. The water had an oily sheen, and debris in the upstream storm drain culvert included numerous golf balls, rusty cans, and other urban debris. No sensitive wildlife were noted at the site. A telephone conversation with Curt Waln, California Department of Fish and Game (January 14, 1998), indicated that no threatened red-legged frogs are known to occur in this area and are not expected to be present at the site. Therefore, no significant impacts to sensitive animals or wildlife habitat is anticipated to have occurred as a consequence of the grading activity.

C. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	<u>Yes/Maybe</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Does the project have the potential to significantly 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☒

Required for Negative Declaration ☐

While no significant impacts occurred to important biological resources, the grading did remove wetland vegetation that offered some limited resting habitat for migratory wildlife. Therefore, the following mitigation measure is recommended:

The applicant should provide a contribution to a wetland mitigation or open space fund that is managed by Ventura County or the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

EIR Required ☐

Negative Declaration ☒

Reviewer: 
Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Date: 1/18/98

Phone: 641-1000

F. REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Game (July 1997a). *Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California*. 14 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Plant Conservation Program

California Department of Fish and Game (July 1997b). *Endangered and Threatened Animals of California*. 11 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

California Department of Fish and Game (July 1997c). *Special Plants List*. 112 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

California Department of Fish and Game (August 1994). *Special Animals*. 28 pgs.

Holland, Robert F. (October 1986). *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California*. California Department of Fish and Game, Nongame Heritage Program. 156 pgs.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (January 31, 1997). *US Listed Flowering Plant Species Index by Lead Region and Status, as of January 31, 1997*.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (February 28, 1996). *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Review of Plant and Animal Taxa That Are Candidates for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species*.

Zeiner, D., W.F. Laudenslayer, Jr., and K.E. Mayer (May 1988). *California's Wildlife*. California Statewide Wildlife Habitat Relationship System, Volumes I, II, & III. California Department of Fish and Game.