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

DMEC

MAR 31 '99 11:25

PROJECT REFERENCE NO.: PD-1769

PROJECT PLANNER: Janie King

DATE: 25 March 1999 (site visit conducted on 24 March 1999)

PROJECT BIOLOGIST: Cher Wellonen, David Magney Environmental Consulting

PROJECT LOCATION: Malibu, western Santa Monica Mountains, Cotharin Road; Triunfo Pass Quadrangle, S1/2, SW1/4, SEC15, T1S, R20W; 34°04'31"N Latitude, 118°57'56"W Longitude. Assessor's Parcel # 700-150-475.

PROJECT ADDRESS: State Highway 1, N on Deer Creek Road, E on Pacific View Road, S on Cotharin Road. The site is approximately 3/4 mile south of the intersection of Pacific View Road and Cotharin Road.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The purpose of the project is to grade more than 50 cubic yards for a manufactured home (67'X26') as a single-family dwelling, a 2-car garage with 10 foot retaining wall, water tank, water well, and future 11'X23' greenhouse.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The project site occurs on a steep (3:1), south-/southeast-facing slope, in a highland area of the Santa Monica Mountains. The site occurs at an elevations between 1,100 ft. and 1,500 ft. The vegetation types present on the site consist of Bigpod Ceanothus Chaparral, with a few Coastal Sage Scrub species intermixed, and annual grasses and forbs as groundcover.

The Bigpod Ceanothus Chaparral located on site consists primarily of woody, perennial, small and large shrubs that are characteristically fire-adapted. The site chaparral vegetation has evidence of past fires (burned mature branches), but the plants onsite have successfully regenerated. The vegetation of the Bigpod Ceanothus Chaparral onsite include the following: Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), Bigpod Ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *megacarpus*), California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *polifolium*), Laurelleaf Sumac (*Malosma laurina*), Holly-leaf Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*), Sugar Bush (*Rhus ovata*), and Chaparral Nightshade (*Solanum xantii* var. *xantii*).

Some Coastal Sage Scrub species fill the gaps between the chaparral species, creating a densely covered slope. The vegetation onsite is non-diverse; however, it creates important habitat for many wildlife species. The most abundant plants of this vegetation type occurring onsite include: Coyote Brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), Common Morning Glory (*Calystegia macrostegia* ssp. *intermedia*), California Encelia (*Encelia californica*), Dune Buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), Sawtooth Goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), Wild Cucumber (*Marah fabaceus*), Smilo Grass (*Piptatherum miliaceum*), Black Sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and Our Lord's Candle (*Yucca whipplei*).

The grasses forming the ground layer, growing under the chaparral and scrub vegetation onsite, include: Slender Oats (*Avena barbata*), Ripgut Grass (*Bromus diandrus*), and Red Brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*). The forbs growing with the grasses include the following: Sow Thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Redstem Filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), Black Mustard (*Brassica nigra*), Summer Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and Green Everlasting (*Gnaphalium californicum*).

A drainage at the south boarder of the site, which drains in the southerly direction, contains two Southern California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *californica*) trees, a special-status species. This walnut species is listed by California Native Plant Society (CNPS) as a List 4 (plants of limited distribution-watch list), with a Rarity-Endangerment-Distribution Code of 1 (Rare) - 2 (Endangered in a portion of its range) - 3 (Endemic to California). However, it is unlikely that these trees will be affected by the proposed construction activities. In addition, Southern California Black Walnut is protected under Ventura County's tree ordinance, which requires a permit for pruning or removal of plants with trunk diameters greater than 4 inches.

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. The special-status plants that are known to could 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, Calochortus plummerae, Cerocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae, Chorizanthe procumbens, Dudleya abramsii* ssp. *parva, Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens, Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia, Eriogonum crocatum, Eriophyllum jepsonii, Galium cliftonsmithii, Juglans californica* ssp. *californica, Pentachaeta lyonii, Perideridia pringlei,* and *Senecio aphanactis.*

The wildlife observed during the site analysis include: a pair of Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), several American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), Brush Rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), and California Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*). Fox (*Vulpes* sp.) scat was observed, and a treefrog (*Hyla* sp.) was heard. Several additional wildlife species are expected to occur in the site location and its vicinity including: Virginia Opossum, Striped Skunk, Raccoon, Deer Mouse, Coyote, Bobcat, Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Flicker, Scrub Jay, Mockingbird, Brewer Blackbird, 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:*				
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 chaparral and scrub would be removed; 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		One rare plant species, Southern California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *californica*), occurs in the outskirts of the site; however, it is unlikely that the trees would be adversely affected by the proposed project. Seasonal field surveys are warranted for special-status species since habitat is present for several taxa.
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 the introduction of new plant species into the area unless invasive exotic plant species are planted as ornamental landscaping. This potential impact can be avoided by forbidding planting of invasive exotic plants. The project is not expected to create a barrier to normal replenishment of existing species.
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 would not change the diversity of species or numbers of any animal species in the Santa Monica Mountains 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.

	Yes	Maybe	No	Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures
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, nor is it expected to result in a barrier to the 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:

Although the Southern California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *californica*) trees, located in the drainage at the southern end of the site, are unlikely to be affected by this project, barrier fencing should be placed around this special-status plant species and the drainage they occur in during any construction activities near them. Barrier fencing will ensure their protection by preventing any unnecessary damage in the event of equipment operating in their close vicinity.

Several special-status plant species have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the project site because chaparral and coastal scrub communities are their optimal habitats. Therefore, seasonal surveys should be conducted regularly to assess any new special-status species occurrences before any construction begins.

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 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

Notes:

a. Seasonal field surveys for special-status plant species are recommended to determine that the proposed project would not adversely affect rare, threatened, or endangered species that may be present onsite.

c. If special-status species are found to be present onsite and avoidance is not feasible, the project would result in a cumulative impact on special-status species of the region.

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

31 March 1999
Date

Cher Wellonen & David L. Magney
Initial Study Preparer