

COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: March 6, 1998
Requestor: Ron Allen
Project: Tentative PM-5105 and Zone Change Z-2922

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Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification: Project site located in an area known to contain sensitive plant and animal species.

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. wetland 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"/>
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 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"/>

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 site is a rocky knoll in the Santa Rosa Valley that is vegetated with a mixture of coastal sage scrub and annual grassland. The steep western side of the site is dominated by beavertail cactus mixed with sagebrush, as are the middle elevations on the southeastern face. Those portions of the south and eastern slopes not dominated by cacti are vegetated primarily with California sagebrush, white and black sage, California buckwheat, and California sunflower. A few lemonade berry and elderberry bushes are also scattered on the east-facing slope. The northerly slope is primarily a non-native grassland dominated by wild oats and brome grasses. No significant wetland vegetation was observed at the site, though a few mulefat bushes were noted in the vicinity of the existing leach field on the proposed southern parcel.

The project site contains outcroppings of Conejo volcanics on the northern proposed parcel that provide suitable habitat for several federally threatened and endangered species, in particular, the endangered Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) and threatened Conejo live-forever (*Dudleya abramsii* spp. parva). Proper habitat for both species exist at the site, but while they were searched for, no confirmed findings were made. The timing of the survey for the Lyon's pentachaeta was not adequate to confirm that the plant is not present at the site since it typically blooms in April and May and this small plant is difficult to find and recognize during the early

spring. Several dudleya plants were found, but the species present was the more common Dudleya lanceolata. Because habitat exists for the Lyon's pentachaeta and its presence or absence could not be confirmed at this time, it is assumed that for the purposes of this environmental study that it does exist at the site and the project as proposed could have a significant project and cumulative effect on this endangered plant.

The coastal sage scrub habitat also provides suitable habitat for several sensitive animal species that have been reported to have declining population levels. Sensitive animal species seen at the site included the coastal cactus wren and the Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, both California species of special concern. Both of these species probably breed at the project site, the wren within the cactus patches, and the sparrow within the sparse coastal sage scrub shrubs on the upper slopes of the hill. Other sensitive species potentially at the site but not observed include the coastal western whiptail, loggerhead shrike, and coast patch-nosed snake. The proposed project in itself may eliminate a few breeding sites for these species, but would not result in a substantial population loss for these species. On a cumulative basis, the project represents an incremental loss of the coastal sage scrub habitat that supports these species, but on a regional basis, the amount of acreage loss is less than significant. Even with the project, suitable breeding habitat will remain for the cactus wren at the site on the steep west-facing slope of the rocky knoll. Breeding habitat for the rufous-crowned sparrow will be reduced, but it is possible that this species would persist at the site also.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☐

Required for Negative Declaration ☒

Two alternative mitigation measures are proposed to reduce the potential for significant impacts to the endangered Lyon's pentachaeta.

1. A pre-construction clearance survey for the Lyon's pentachaeta shall be conducted during the appropriate season (April-May) prior to any grading activity. The survey shall be done by a botanist familiar with this endangered plant. If populations of the plant are discovered, then mitigation measure 2 shall be applied as appropriate.

2. Grading for the residential pad shall not occur above the 690-foot contour that is shown on the Tentative Parcel Map No. 5105. The residential pad for the northern parcel should be moved to the northeast with access taken from the cul-de-sac end of Alicante Court.

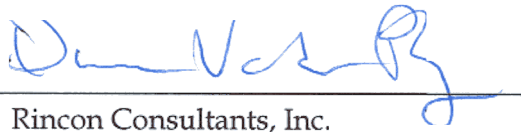
Use of mitigation measure 2 would not only maintain the habitat of the endangered Lyon's pentachaeta, it would also maintain additional suitable habitat for the Conejo dudleya, cactus wren, and rufous-crowned sparrow.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

EIR Required ☐

Negative Declaration ☒

Reviewer:


Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Date:

3/16/98

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.