

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

PROJECT REFERENCE NO.:
PMW-973 LLS

PROJECT PLANNER: Debbie Morrisset

DATE: 11 October 1999
(site visited on 9 October 1999)

PROJECT BIOLOGIST:
Carl Thelander and David L. Magney

PROJECT LOCATION: The project site is located in Lockwood Valley. One lot is positioned at NW ¼, NW ¼, Section 26, T8N, R21W (south lot); and the other lot is positioned at SW ¼, SW ¼, Section 23, T8N, R21W (north lot).

PROJECT ADDRESS: Lyndley O. Crumley property, 16011 Mountain Lilac Trail, Lockwood Valley

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: The project includes a large lot subdivision, in which two illegal lots will be combined into one legal lot (an 80 acre site).

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The project site occurs in Lockwood Valley, ½ mile southeast of Frazier Mountain, less than one mile southwest of Amargosa Creek, and approximately one mile northeast of Adobe Mountain. The site occurs in USDA Los Padres National Forest lands at elevations between 5,200 and 5,300 feet.

A house is proposed for the east side of the south lot, and domestic water will be provided by two existing wells (one on the east and west side of the south lot).

The vegetation types present onsite consist of two general types: Singleleaf Pinyon Pine Woodland (on slopes) and Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub (on flats). The Singleleaf Pinyon Pine Woodland is the predominant vegetation type in the Lockwood Valley area. This woodland is dominated by Singleleaf Pinyon Pine (*Pinus monophylla*), and at the project site, it includes Tucker Oak (*Quercus john-tuckeri*) as an important tree canopy contributor with an understory consisting of rock cress (*Arabis* sp.), Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), Kennedy Buckwheat (*E. kennedyi* ssp. *kennedyi*), penstemon (*Penstemon* sp.), and Our Lord's Candle (*Yucca whipplei*).

The Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub is dominated by *Artemisia tridentata*. The associate species contributing to the Great Basin Sagebrush shrub canopy include Fourwing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), Rubber Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), and Green Mormon Tea (*Ephedra viridis*), while the ground layer includes several species of grasses (including a perennial bunchgrass) and forbs, such as thistle (*Cirsium occidentale*), and birds beak (*Cordylanthus* sp.).

Due to the seasonal timing of the field survey, wildlife observations on site were minimal. The field visit only revealed the presence of Black-tailed Jack Rabbit (*Lepus californica*).

A review of the California Natural Diversity Data Base records for the area indicate habitat is present onsite, or in the Lockwood Valley region, for several special-status species. Special-status plants include Big Bear Valley Woollypod (*Astragalus leucolobus*), Pale-Yellow Layia (*Layia heterotricha*), Flax-like Monardella (*Monardella linoides* ssp. *oblonga*), Abram Oxytheca (*Oxytheca parishii* var. *abramsii*), and Salt Spring Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*). Special-status animals include Vernal Pool Fairyshrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), Southern Rubber

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Boa (*Charina bottae umbratica*), Yellow-bellied Salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzia*), and Tehachapi Pocket Mouse (*Perognathus alticola inexpectatus*).

Other special-status plant species known to occur in the region include Heart-leaved Thornmint (*Acanthomintha obovata* ssp. *cordata*), Mt. Pinos Onion (*Allium howellii* var. *clokeyi*), Unexpected Larkspur (*Delphinium inopinum*), Mt. Pinos Larkspur (*D. parryi* ssp. *purpureum*), Southern Alpine Buckwheat (*Eriogonum kennedyi* ssp. *alpigenum*), Jepson Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum jepsonii*), Spring Lessingia (*Lessingia tenuis*), Silky Lupine (*Lupinus elatus*), Adobe Yampah (*Perideridia pringlei*), Transverse Range Phacelia (*Phacelia exilis*), and Pine Green-gentian (*Swertia neglecta*).

Habitat is present onsite for most of these special-status vascular plants; however, most are not visible or identifiable during October. Seasonal surveys are required, in the Lockwood Valley region, during late spring and mid- to late summer. The site could also provide habitat for special-status lichen species, for which surveys may be conducted year round. The California Lichen Society is currently developing a list of special-status lichen species that should be considered during the CEQA review process.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

<u>Type of Environmental Impact</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures</u>
I. PLANT LIFE. <i>Will the proposal result in.</i>				
a) Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X	Combining two 40-acre parcels into one 80-acre parcel is not expected to reduce species diversity or the number of one or more species of native vascular and nonvascular (e.g. bryophytes and lichens) plants onsite and in the Lockwood Valley region.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of plants?			X	Combining two 40-acre parcels into one 80-acre parcel is not expected to reduce the numbers of one or more species of unique, rare, or endangered species of plants (special-status species). Suitable habitat is present onsite for numerous special-status plant species. Seasonal field surveys are required to determine if any special-status plant species are present onsite.
c) Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?			X	Combining two 40-acre parcels into one 80-acre parcel is not expected to result in introductions of new plant species into the area. Species of concern are invasive exotic taxa that may invade natural communities and compete with native plants, which in turn may adversely affect native wildlife.
d) Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?			X	While the lot(s) does not contain any cultivated crops, pinyon nuts are regularly harvested by commercial and private parties, including Chumash descendents, throughout the Lockwood Valley region. The Singleleaf Pinyon Pine (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>) is the only commonly used source for Pine Nuts in California. The loss many Singleleaf Pinyon Pine trees will reduce the Pine Nut source.
II. ANIMAL LIFE. <i>Will the proposal result in:</i>				
a) Change in the species diversity, or numbers of any animal species (birds and land animals, including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, or insects)?			X	Combining two 40-acre parcels into one 80-acre parcel is not expected to reduce the value of the property as foraging habitat for mammalian predators and raptors, which are using the area in its current state.

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| b) Reduction in numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered animal species? | X Per NDDB records search. |
| c) Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? | X Mule deer frequent the area; it is not known if the area is within a major migration corridor. It is likely that most deer occur on NF lands adjacent to this private parcel. Introduced domestic pets will likely encounter predators. Additionally, they will likely reduce the quality of the wildlife habitat in the immediate area of the building sites; therefore, minimizing the extent of the building envelope is recommended. |
| d) Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat? | X Combining two 40-acre parcels into one 80-acre parcel is not expected to reduce the area's value as foraging habitat for mule deer, mammalian predators, and raptors will deteriorate. |

Additional comments or explanations:

Combining two illegal lots into one legal lot would not likely significantly impact or reduce Singleleaf Pinyon Pine Woodland and Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub in the region, associated land use/management activities could significantly alter the natural character and biodiversity of the property. However, subsequent development of the 80-acre parcel may include harvesting trees for firewood, intensive grazing of the 80-acre lot, clearing brush for fire safety, and other vegetation-altering activities. Landscaping practices may also introduce invasive exotic plant and animal species that invade and compete with native species in onsite and surrounding habitats.

If the property should be developed in any manner in the future, seasonal field surveys for special-status plants and wildlife need to be conducted to determine if any special-status species are present onsite. Botanical surveys should be conducted during late spring (May-June) and mid to late summer (late-July to mid-September) for vascular plants. Lichen surveys may be conducted at anytime, except when snow covers the ground. Botanical surveys should be floristic in nature, and should be conducted by qualified botanists familiar with the Lockwood Valley flora.

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MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT

<u>Environmental Effect</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>No</u>
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
<u>Alternatives to the Proposed Action.</u> 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

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RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYST:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

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

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

Oct. 11, 1999

Recommended Considerations:

Development should be relocated to areas not containing sensitive habitat or populations of any special-status species (after seasonal floristic and special-status species surveys have been conducted onsite).

2. Building envelopes should be designed to avoid all sensitive biological resources.
3. Activities beyond the designated building envelopes that would alter the natural vegetation should be restricted or prohibited per deed restriction or other suitable legal method.
4. All development should avoid direct or indirect impacts to the existing drainages, especially those containing Scalebroom Scrub or other wetland and riparian vegetation/habitats.
5. Groundwater withdrawals should be regulated if the onsite groundwater aquifer is found to be connected to or support downstream/downslope wetlands.

Photographs of PMW-973 LLS Property in Lockwood Valley



View N from S-end. Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) dominates lowlands. 9 Oct 1999



Zoom-in of view N from S-end of property. 9 Oct 1999.



View WNW from SE corner of property. Great Basin Sagebrush in foreground, Pinyon-Juniper Woodland on slopes. 9 Oct 1999.



View NNW from top of small hill in SW corner of property. Pinyon-Juniper Woodland in foreground. 9 Oct 1999.



View S from top of small hill near SW corner of property. Newly cleared area at base of hill near Jeep. 9 Oct 1999.



View E from small hill. SE corner of property in center of photo, before ranch complex. Frazier Mtn. in background. 9 Oct 1999.



Photograph of *Eriogonum kennedyi* ssp. *kennedyi*, a cushion-forming shrub, Kennedy Buckwheat. Growing on top of small hill at S end of property. The cushion-mat plant community is considered a sensitive plant community since it is uncommon and will not tolerate disturbance. 9 Oct 1999.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

A field survey was conducted on 9 October 1999. The project is located at 16011 Mountain Lilac Trail in Lockwood Valley. The project includes a large lot subdivision in which two illegal lots will be combined into one legal lot (80 acres). The vegetation present consists to two major types: Singleleaf Pinyon Pine Woodland (on slopes) and Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub (on flats). Due to the seasonal timing of the field visit, wildlife observations on site were minimal.

Item A. Endangered, threatened, or rare species:

A review of the California Natural Diversity Data Base records for the area indicate habitat is present onsite, or in the Lockwood Valley region, for several special-status species. Special-status plants include Big Bear Valley Woollypod (*Astragalus leucolobus*), Pale-Yellow Layia (*Layia heterotricha*), Flax-like Monardella (*Monardella linoides* ssp. *oblonga*), Abram Oxytheca (*Oxytheca parishii* var. *abramsii*), and Salt Spring Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*). Special-status animals include Vernal Pool Fairyshrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), Southern Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae umbratica*), Yellow-bellied Salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzia*), and Tehachapi Pocket Mouse (*Perognathus alticola inexpectatus*).

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If the property is proposed for development, seasonal field surveys are warranted for special-status plants and wildlife. These should be conducted by a qualified biologist(s) and at the appropriate time of year for the resources being surveyed.

Item B. Wetland Habitat:

No wetlands are located on or near the parcel and, therefore, no impacts are expected.

Item C. Coastal Habitat:

Not applicable due to interior location.

Item D. Migration Corridors:

Numerous wildlife species would be expected to migrate through the general area. Among these are mule deer. However, creation of this parcel will not affect any migration corridors since ample open space is present in the region.

Item E. Locally Important Species or Communities:

While no locally important or unique communities occur onsite, please refer to Item A (above) regarding sensitive plants and animals that may occur onsite, or in the immediate area of the property.