

SECTION B **INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST**

Job: PMW-1049

Requester: Debbie Morrisset

Applicant: Marr Ranch

Date: October 28, 2000

Survey Type: Field

Rationale: Large lot subdivision

Site Description: A field visit of the project site (Marr Ranch, Tapo Canyon, in Simi Valley) was conducted on October 28, 2000. The 1800 acre parcel is located just east of Tapo Canyon Road, about 3 miles north of the Simi Valley Freeway. The topography is distinctly hilly with about a 300 ft. difference in elevation. The vegetation is predominantly coastal sage scrub with scattered valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) and coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*). Dominant plants on the slopes are California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) and wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*).

	Project Impact Degree of Effect*				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect*			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
6. <u>Biological Resources</u>								
a. endangered, threatened or rare species	—	—	X	—	—	—	X	—
b. wetland habitat	X	—	—	—	X	—	—	—
c. coastal habitat	X	—	—	—	X	—	—	—
d. migration corridors	X	—	—	—	X	—	—	—
e. Locally important species/communities	X	—	—	—	X	—	—	—

*N No impact

LS Less than significant

PS-M Potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance

PS Potentially significant, even after mitigation



SECTION C
DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

- a. Several rare or endangered species have been reported within 5 miles of the project site. The western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondi*) has been observed west of Black Canyon. The toad requires vernal pools for breeding and egg-laying, and no such habitat was found on the project site. Therefore, the western spadefoot would not be expected to occur.

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) has been sighted in Upper Dry Canyon, about 1.5 miles west of the project site. The burrowing owl is found in low-growing vegetation, typical of that found on the site. The owl requires burrowing mammals for food, usually the California ground squirrel. The project site could be a suitable habitat for the owl. Ground squirrel burrows were visible.

Found within 5 miles of the project site, in the Rocky Peak area, is the San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*). The woodrat habitat is a dense chaparral with chamise, scrub oak, laurel sumac, black sage, and California sagebrush. The woodrat is particularly abundant in rock outcrops and rocky cliffs and slopes. No such habitat was present on the project site. Rocks were alternating layers of shale and a friable sandstone with no rocky cliffs or sandstone boulder outcrops.

Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), a federal species of concern, has been observed within 4 miles of the project site, in the hills of eastern Simi Valley. The Santa Susana tarplant grows in crevices of sandstone boulders and around rocky sandstone outcrops. Associated species include wild buckwheat, chamise, purple sage, California sagebrush, toyon, and bush monkey flower. The presence of Santa Susana tarplant on the project site is highly unlikely. No rocky sandstone boulders or outcrops were observed. No evidence of the plant was observed during the survey.

Chorizanthe parryi var. *fernandina*, the San Fernando Valley spineflower, a federal candidate for endangered status, has recently been observed at Ahmanson Ranch (1999 and 2000). It had previously been thought to be extinct. The habitat of the spineflower is on sandy soil of coastal sage scrub. It is possible that the San Fernando Valley spineflower does occur on the project site. However, to determine if it is present, a survey would need to be conducted during the months of May or June.

The federal endangered plant, *Dodecahema leptoceras* (Slender-horned spineflower), had been observed within 5 miles of the project site. However, it may now be extirpated. It is found in alluvia fan sage scrub, in flood deposited terraces and washes, associated with, *Encelia*, *Dalea*, and *Lepidospartum*. No such habitat occurs on the project site, so the presence of the slender-horned spineflower would not be expected.

Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), a federal species of concern, has been observed within 5 miles of the project site, in the Santa Susana Pass area. The lily is usually found in coastal sage scrub or valley and foothill grassland. Soil is usually sandy or alluvial. The habitat of the project site could be suitable for the presence of Plummer's mariposa lily. A survey at the time of blooming, usually late May and June, would be necessary to determine its presence.

- b. There is no wetland habitat on the project site, so there should be no disturbance of such a site.
- c. The project site is not near the coast, so no impact on a coastal habitat should occur.
- d. The project site is likely a migration corridor for many animals. However, the subdivision of the larger parcel should not affect the migration pattern. If development is to occur on the property, then further



evaluation might be necessary.

- e. Reported within 5 miles of the project site are several locally important plant communities. A coast live oak riparian forest has been observed in Las Lajas Canyon, a tributary to Tapo Canyon, about 2 miles east of the property. Also observed in the same canyon is a southern mixed riparian forest with sycamore, cottonwood, coast live oak, and willow. No riparian habitat occurs in the parcel to be subdivided, so no impact on these two communities would be expected.

A cismontane alkali marsh has also been observed along a tributary of Tapo Canyon, with such species as *Distichlis spicata*, *Juncus mexicanus*, *Apium graveolens*, and *Xanthium strumarium*. No such alkali marsh is present on the project site, so there should be no impact on this community.

West of Tapo Canyon, about 3 miles north of the project site is a valley oak woodland. Although valley oaks are found on the project site, these are spaced rather far apart and the area would not be considered a woodland.

Finally, a southern willow scrub with dense willow, and scattered cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) has been observed in the vicinity of Tapo Canyon. The habitat is a deeply incised channel with a silt loam substrate. No such habitat is present on the project site, so there will be no impact on this community.



SECTION D
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:

YES/MAYBE NO

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, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time while long-term impacts will endure well into the future).
3. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (Several projects may have relatively small individual impacts on two or more resources, but the total of those impacts on the environment is significant).
4. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

 ~~X~~

 X

 X

 X



SECTION E
DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☐ I find the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.
- ☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measure(s) described below will be applied to the project. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.
- ☐ I find the proposed project, individually and/or cumulatively MAY have a significant effect on the environment and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

Mitigation Measures

Although there are no plans to develop the parcels at this time, should future development be planned, then an environmental study should be carried out to determine if the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) or the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var *fernandina*) are present and would be impacted.

Gillian Lh Dr. Barbara Collins

Signature of Preparer
Dr. Barbara Collins

30 Oct '00

Date
October 30, 2000

