

COUNTY OF VENTURA

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: August 25, 2003

Requestor: Debbie Morrisset

Project: CCC-0302 (PM-5420)

Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification: Sensitive flora known to be in the vicinity; site checked for potential rare plant habitat and water courses.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
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 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"/>
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Degree of Effect Explanation

N= None

LS = Less than significant effect

PS-M = Significant effect; Mitigation incorporated for a ND

PS = Potentially Significant effect; EIR required

B. DISCUSSION

The project site consists of the legalization of a 5.20-acre parcel located on the southeast corner of the Yerba Buena Road and Hasler Road intersection. The applicant requests a Conditional Certificate of Compliance to legalize a previously undisclosed lot subdivision.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (September 2002) listed several special-status species that could be present within the communities onsite. These are discussed below as applicable to the project location.

USGS topographic maps were reviewed utilizing computer topographic maps (National Geographic, 2001). The onsite elevation ranges from approximately 775 to 975 feet above mean sea level. The site slopes steeply from Yerba Buena Road uphill to the east and from Hasler Road uphill to the south. Rincon Consultants performed a site visit on March 21, 2003. The site appeared to be completely undeveloped, containing native chaparral habitat with steep rocky areas adjacent to Yerba Buena Road.

The parcel is dominated by native chaparral with pockets of coastal sage, rock outcrops and individual coast live oak trees. The chaparral community is dominated by ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.) and mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), with other species including chamise



(*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemesia californica*), black sage (*Salvia melifera*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* and *E. cinereum*), and laurel sumac (*Rhus laurina*).

Associated species include toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), white and purple sage (*Salvia apiana* and *S. leucophylla*), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*), gooseberry (*Ribes* sp.), and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*).

No blueline streams are shown on the USGS quadrangle and none were observed on the site. A blueline stream does occur on the north side of Hasler Road, which is adjacent to the northern property boundary. In addition, the Little Sycamore Canyon riparian area lies on the west side of Yerba Buena Road, which is adjacent to the western property boundary.

No sensitive wildlife species listed by the CNDDDB were observed during the March 21st site visit; however, the following five special-status species listed in CNDDDB records have the potential to occur or forage over the project site.

- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), a wide ranging species found in mountains, foothills, and adjacent grasslands. A State species of concern.
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), a wide ranging species found in open grasslands, sagebrush flats, and foothill areas. A State species of concern.
- Coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), found in deserts, semi-arid areas, and in woodland and riparian habitats. A Federal species of concern.
- San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*), found in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. A State species of concern.
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), occurs in coastal scrub and rocky outcrops. A State species of concern.

No sensitive plant species listed by the CNDDDB were observed on the project site, however, a thorough survey for plant species was not conducted, nor was it timely as yet, due to the later blooming period of most of these plants. Nine special-status plant species have the potential to occur within habitats on the site, and include:

- Plummer's Mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), found in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub (potentially located on west and south portions of the property). A CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to July.
- Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), a deciduous shrub species that occurs primarily on sandstone substrates with a single known occurrence in the Santa Monica Mountains in chaparral habitat. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from July to November.
- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp. *blochmaniae*), a perennial herb that occurs in bluff scrub, chaparral, coastal scrub from 15 to 1,476 feet elevation. This plant is a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to June and is found in more open areas, potentially on the west and south sides of the property.
- Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *agourensis*), a perennial herb found in chaparral cismontane woodland/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to June.



- Marescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp *marcescens*), a perennial herb found in chaparral/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened, a State rare, and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to June.
- Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp *ovatifolia*), a perennial herb found in chaparral or coastal scrub/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from March to June.
- Conejo dudleya (*Dudleya parva*), a perennial herb found in coastal scrub and valley and foothill grassland/ rocky or gravelly habitats. A Federal threatened and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to June.
- Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), a perennial herb that is found in chaparral, coastal scrub, and valley/foothill grasslands. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to July.
- Rayless ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*), an annual herb found in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub. A CNPS List 2 species that blooms from January to April.

In addition, mature oak trees that occur on the project site are considered a locally important species by Ventura County.

Biological resources issues:

- Endangered, threatened, or rare species.** This lot subdivision legalization would have no direct impacts to endangered, threatened, or rare species located on this site. However, any future development actions could affect listed species if present. The site's dense chaparral limits the possibility of these rare plants occurring at the site, but they nonetheless could occur on the more open steep areas on the west and south portion of the site. Species of particular concern are Lyon's pentachaeta, Conejo buckwheat, and all of the dudleyas (except Blochman's dudleya). The loss of these species or their habitat would be considered significant. Therefore, mitigation is suggested for the protection of sensitive plant species and associated habitat, at that time that actual development plans are proposed.

Although there is the potential for the San Diego horned lizard, western whiptail golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, and rufous-crowned sparrow to occur onsite, none of these species are listed as endangered, threatened, or rare. The loss of less than 5.2 acres of habitat would not significantly impact these species. No mitigation would be required.

- Wetland Habitat.** No specific wetland habitat was observed onsite, although due to the steep terrain and thick chaparral cover, much of the site was not directly observed. Any future development actions that would potentially impact any wetland areas would require appropriate setback (100 feet) per Ventura County ordinance and/or mitigation per regulatory requirements.
- Coastal Habitat.** Environmentally sensitive habitats listed within the Ventura County Coastal Area Plan (January, 2002) include a designation for creek corridors found within the coastal zone on the South Coast. Although no designated creek corridors occur on the parcel site, Little Sycamore Canyon has been designated as an



environmentally sensitive habitat by Ventura County. This resource lies across Yerba Buena Road approximately 20 feet from the western property boundary. The western portion of the parcel adjacent to Yerba Buena Road is steep and rocky and likely precludes development in this area. Therefore, effects to coastal habitat would be limited to storm water runoff from the site. If future development grading of the site exceeds one acre, the project will be required to meet the Ventura County Stormwater Quality Urban Impact Mitigation Plan (SQUIMP), which would be sufficient to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. If grading is less than one acre, potential impacts to coastal habitats would be less than significant.

- d. **Migration Corridors.** The parcel is 5.2-acres in size and is surrounded by native habitat areas, with Yerba Buena and Hasler Roads providing only partial barriers to the movement of some species. Species passing through the project site may partially be blocked by future development but will alternately be able to utilize other areas of the site and adjacent undeveloped land for passage, given one single residence (plus guesthouse) permitted on the lot. Therefore, any future development would not be a significant barrier to migration. No mitigation is required.
- e. **Locally Important Species/Communities.** Native oak trees exist on the site and the loss of oak trees would result in a **Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation** is implemented to reduce the impacts. The subject parcel is within the Santa Monica Mountains Overlay Zone. Oaks and other native trees (as listed in the non-coastal ordinance) are protected by Ventura County in the non-coastal zone, inferring that the County considers them to be a locally important species, and as such should afford them the same protection in the coastal zone as part of "environmentally sensitive habitat". This is consistent with the Coastal Act (PRC 30107.5) because oaks perform a special role in ecosystems and can be easily disturbed or degraded by development. The lot legalization would not directly impact these resources, but future development of the site could have potentially significant impacts.

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 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 ☒

Although this lot subdivision legalization would not result in direct significant impacts to biological resources, future grading and development may impact biological resources potentially present onsite. Therefore, the following measures are suggested prior to any development or future grading.

- a. **Sensitive Flora.** Prior to any future development or grading activities, surveys for sensitive plant species shall be performed during the blooming period, when species potentially onsite are observable and can be identified to species. If endangered, threatened, or rare species occur onsite, they shall be avoided and fenced to prevent disturbance. A conservation easement shall be placed on such portion of the property that contains those species.
- e. **Native Trees.** Per the ESH Policy D.6 (Ventura County Coastal Area Plan, 2002), a future building envelope shall be identified on the final map that avoids oak trees as much as possible. The areas of native oak trees, on site, shall be mapped and preferably protected from disturbance by a deed restriction to eliminate development within those areas. This restriction shall be recorded with the county recorder, prior to recordation of the Conditional Certificate of Compliance -Parcel Map. If a suitable building envelope cannot be developed without removing or disturbing oak resources, the following mitigation shall apply: mitigation for the replacement of County listed protected trees would include a minimum of a 3 to 1 replacement, with the minimum replacement size of a 15-gallon container. This recorded deed restriction and associated mitigation will reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☒ EIR Required ☐

Reviewer: _____

Date: _____

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August 25, 2003



F. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

California Department of Fish and Game (January 2003). Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California. 14 pgs. Habitat Conservation Division, Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch.

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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.

National Geographic. 2001. USGS Topographic Maps on CD-ROM. San Francisco, California.

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Ventura County General Plan, January 2002. Area Plan for the Coastal Zone.

