Historic Biological Reports
Scan Control Sheet

County Project Number(s): CUP-3142

Report Type (check one):
- ☐ Initial Study
- ☐ Species Inventory/Survey
- ☐ Focused Study
- ☒ EIR
- ☐ Draft EIR
- ☐ EIS
- ☐ ND
- ☐ MND
- ☐ Other

Report Date (Month/Day/Year): 08/11/1988

Check if the following apply to the report:

- ☐ Wetland and/or aquatic habitat
- ☐ Within designated Coastal Zone
- ☐ Potential movement corridor for fish and/or wildlife

6.13 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The following analysis is based on aerial photo interpretation, literature search, and field reconnaissance. Field work was conducted on April 21, 1987, and entailed a walk-over survey using transects of opportunity through the proposed expansion portions of the site and the proposed new access road.

6.13.1 Baseline Environmental Information

The Simi Valley Landfill and proposed slope easement expansion area are located on the lower slopes of Big Mountain, northwest and adjacent to the City of Simi Valley. Regional biological communities predominantly comprise introduced grassland and native coastal sage scrub. Intervening drainage canyons are also present, vegetated primarily with chaparral or scrub-covered slopes and floors dotted with individual oak trees and small oak woodlands. Due to the arid climate, the region contains very few riparian areas. The project site has been used as a landfill since 1970; therefore, vegetative communities at and adjacent to the project site have either been removed or severely disturbed. Habitats in proximity to the existing landfill include ruderal (i.e., disturbed) grassland and coastal sage scrub. Scattered oaks are present east of the landfill within Madera Canyon. Vegetation adjacent to the landfill has been adversely affected over the 17 years of operation by dust accumulation, which has resulted in low plant species diversity. Ongoing cattle grazing and lack of a year-round supply of surface water, combined with low plant diversity, have resulted in low wildlife values within the vacant lands that surround the landfill site.

6.13.1.1 Flora

Vegetative communities present within the proposed expansion areas and access road are illustrated on Figure 6.13-1, and include ruderal grassland, coastal sage scrub, and individual scattered oaks. Sandstone outcrops are also delineated on the figure because of their potential value to wildlife. The Technical Appendix, Biological Resources section, provides a list of typical plant species that are common in similar habitat types within Simi Valley, and denotes which species were identified within the expansion area and roadway.

Ruderal Grassland. The primary form of disturbance experienced within this community is from previous and ongoing cattle grazing. Although additional habitat disturbance has resulted from the dust of existing landfill operations, the livestock grazing operations are the main cause of the disturbed condition of this cover type. These conditions include very low species diversity, with introduced (non-native) grasses as the dominant plant species, and scattered small native shrubs. Dominant plants within this habitat include wheat (Avena sp.), barley (Hordeum sp.), sage (Salvia sp.), and sawtooth goldenbush (Haplopappus squarrosus). The shrubs have been heavily grazed.

The majority of land within the proposed expansion area is composed of the ruderal grassland community. With the exception of the land to the east and a small area south of the proposed development area, the project site is surrounded by ruderal grassland.

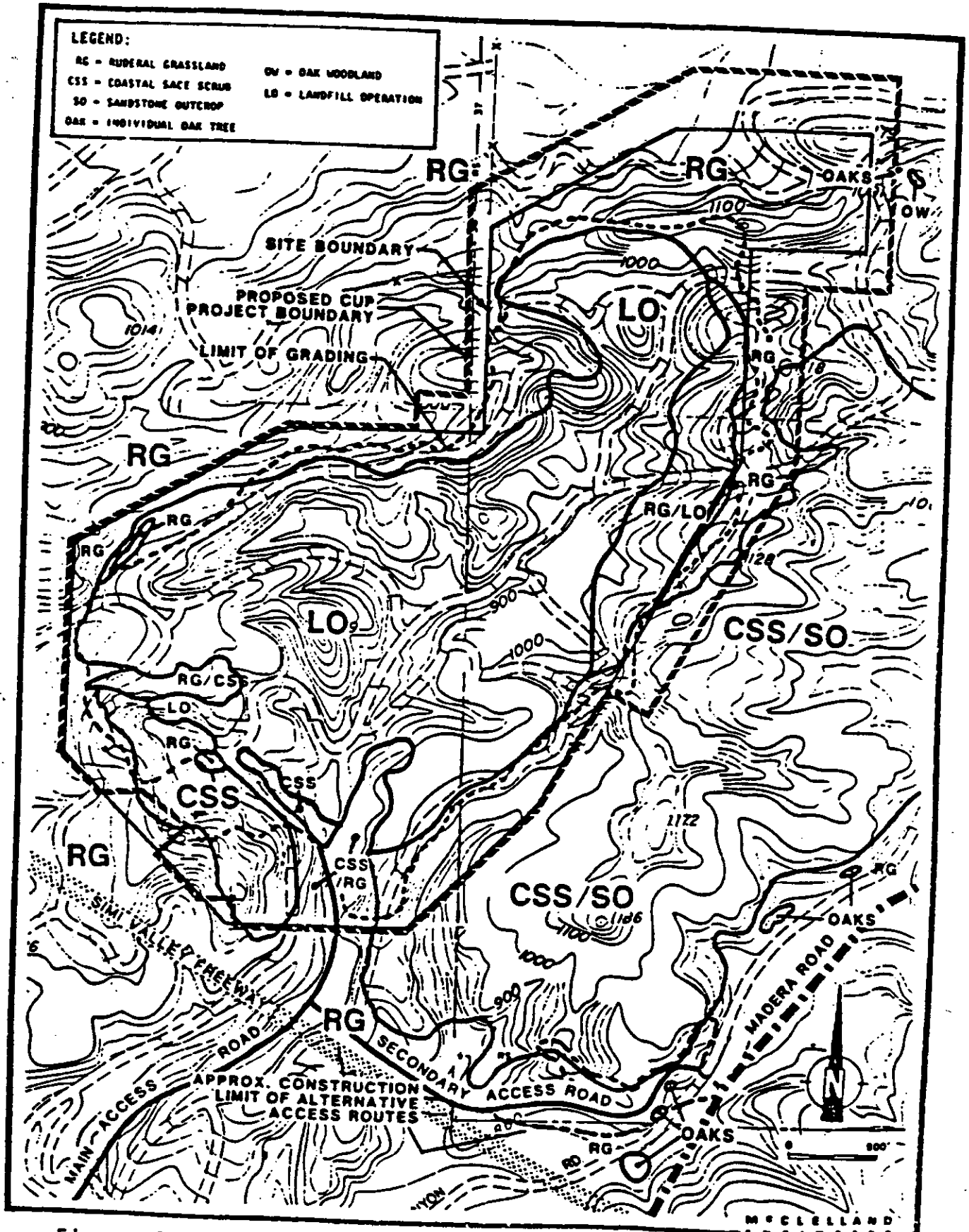

Figure 6.13-1. Biological Communities, Simi Valley Landfill Expansion.

Coastal Sage Scrub. This scrub community represents a very small component of the expansion area of the site. The scrub areas within the development boundaries occur in small pockets and show low species diversity due to the adverse efects of livestock grazing. Dominant species include California sagebrush (Artemsia californica) and purple sage (Salvia leucophylla). Chamise (Adenostoma fasiculatum) and scattered spanish bayonet (Yucca whipplei ssp. percursa) also occur within this community. Very few additional plant species are present in those areas with ongoing grazing within this community.

Coastal sage scrub is found in the southern and southwestern portion of the site, and adjacent to the proposed new access road. An area of dense, well-developed and little disturbed sage scrub occurs to the east of the expansion boundary. This area also contains numerous large sandstone outcrops and scattered individual coast live oak trees (Quercus agrifolia).

Oak Woodland/Individual Oaks. No oak woodlands or individual oaks are within the boundaries of the expansion area. A few individual coast live oaks (Quercus agrifolia) are within and adjacent to the approximate construction limits of the alternative access routes. Individual oaks and oak woodlands occur in the site vicinity, well to the east of the development boundaries.

6.13.1.2 Fauna

The disturbed quality of the proposed expansion area results in low species abundance and low wildlife values within the site. Common species expected to occur are animals tolerant of noise, dust, vibration, and equipment activity. Animals typically found around landfills include gulls, ground squirrels, turkey vultures, and the coyotes that predate on these species. Many additional species occur within the surrounding undistrubed habitats, primarily in the coastal sage scrub community east of the project site. Typical species expected to occur where dense scrub is present include California thrasher, wrentit, Anna's hummingbird, scrub jay, coyote, grey fox, rabbit, badger, rodents, gophers, skunk, and deer.

Species found in the oak woodlands include various woodpeckers, red-tail, Cooper's and red-shouldered hawks, great-horned owl, kinglets, warblers, vireos, western bluebird, and raccoon. Various lizards and snakes could occur throughout the area. Golden eagle, bobcat, and mountain lion may also occur, particularly in the rocky outcrops in the open space areas to the east of the site (Personal Communication, Michael Kuhn, City of Simi Valley, April 1987).

The grassland community provides important nesting and foraging habitat for many species, including deer, badger, grey fox, and numerous small birds and mammals. Raptors (birds of prey) use grassland habitats extensively for hunting. The sandstone outcrops adjacent to the project site provide nesting areas and lookout sites for these birds. Raptors seen soaring above the site include red-shouldered and red-tailed hawks, turkey vulture, kestrel, and northern harrier (marsh hawk). The Technical Appendix, Biological Resources Section, provides a list of animal species typical within the habitats found in the vicinity of the site.

6.13.1.3 Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive Flora and Fauna

No species of plants or animals designated by the federal or state government as endangered or threatened have been identified as occurring within the

proposed development areas of the project site, and no such species are expected to occur either on or adjacent to the site (Personal Communication, Pat Crevelt, California Department of Fish and Game, April 1987; and Rick York, California Native Plant Society, April 1987). Several sensitive or protected species could occur within or adjacent to the project site (Personal Communication, Steve Kimple, California Department of Fish and Game, April 1987). Table 6.13-1 summarizes these species, their legal listing status, and their known or expected occurrence on-site and in the project vicinity. The following is a summary of pertinent regulations regarding sensitive flora and fauna.

Federal or State-Listed Endangered Species. The Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (50 CFR 17) and the republished list of endangered and threatened species (48 FR 34182-34196) provide legal protection, and require definition of critical habitat and development of recovery plans for plant and animal species in danger of extinction. California has a parallel mandate embodied in the California Endangered Species Act of 1970 and its corollary laws, the California Species Preservation Act of 1980, and the California Native Plant Protection Act of 1977. These two laws regulate the listing of plant and animal species as endangered or threatened. No federal or state-listed species are known to occur on the project site.

Candidate Species for Federal Listing as Threatened or Endangered. These species are candidates for classification by federal and/or state agencies as threatened or endangered. Although they have no current legal protection, their status could potentially change during the life of a project and, therefore, must be identified. At this time, the only candidate species in the project vicinity is the red-legged frog. This species is not expected to occur on-site due to the lack of appropriate habitat (i.e., perennial water).

Special Interest and Sensitive Species. In addition to the official listing of a species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or California Department of Fish & Game (CDF&G) as threatened or endangered, several other classification systems are used to indicate the relative sensitivity of a plant or animal. A brief description of some of these is provided below:

- National Species of Special Emphasis (NSSE) - administered by FWS. These are species of "high biological, legal, and/or public interest" for which detailed management plans are developed by FWS (Federal Register 48 No. 237). Although these species are not legally protected, they "merit special effort and attention by (FWS) at the national level."

- Species of Special Concern - administered by CDF&G. This system is similar to the federal NSSE. Although the species are not legally protected, the system is a planning tool that involves a three-level sensitivity ranking: Priority 1 (species facing imminent extirpation if current trends continue); Priority 2 (species with obvious population decline throughout most of their range in the state); and Priority 3 (species not in present danger of extirpation but with very low population numbers).

TABLE 6.13-1. SENSITIVE FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE PROJECT VICINITY*

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status‡	Habitat	Known Occurrence Within Project Vicinity#
PLANTS				
Astragalus brauntownii	Braunton's milk-vetch	CNPS-1B	Inland sage scrub; disturbed areas	Not on-site
Baccharis plummerae	Plummer's baccharis	CNPS-4	Oak woodlands	Not on-site
Boykinia rotundifolia	Round-leaved boykinia	CNPS-4	Near springs; in deep canyons	Not on-site
Calochortus catalinae	Catalina mariposa lily	Appendix I	Grasslands; oak savannah	On-site
Cercocarpus betuloides ssp. blancheae	Island mountain mahogany	CNPS-4	Santa Monica Mountains Woodland/chaparral	Not on-site
Chorizanthe wheeleri	Wheeler's spine flower	CNPS-4	Santa Monica Mountains chaparral	Not on-site
Dudleya blochmaniae ssp. blochmaniae	Blochman's live forever	CNPS-4	Dry, rocky soils	Not on-site
Dudleya cymosa ssp. marcascens	Santa Monica Mountains dudleya	CR/1B	Dry, volcanic, rocky soils; coastal influence	Not on-site

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TABLE 6.13-1 (continued)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status‡	Habitat	Known Occurrence Within Project Vicinity#
Birds (continued)				
Accipiter striatus	Sharp-shinned hawk	CSC	Hilly terrain with nearby open country for hunting. Uncommon in study area but may be seen occasionally in migration.	Not expected
Aquila chrysaetos	Golden eagle	CP; NSSE	Same as above.	Not expected
Athene cunicularia	Burrowing owl	CP	Open country.	Not expected
Bubo virginianus	Great horned owl	CP	Hilly terrain with nearby open country for hunting.	Not expected on-site
Buteo jamaicensis	Red-tailed hawk	CP	Hilly terrain with nearby open country for hunting.	Not expected
Buteo swainsoni	Swainson's hawk	CT; CP	Hilly terrain with nearby open country for hunting. Uncommon in study area but may be seen occasionally in migration.	Not expected on-site

TABLE 6.13-1 (continued)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status‡	Habitat	Known Occurrence Within Project Vicinity#
Birds (continued)				
Cathartos abera	Turkey Vulture	CP	Hilly terrain with nearby open country for hunting.	On-site
Circus cyaneus	Northern harrier (Marsh hawk)	CSC; CP	Open country, such as grassland, low scrub habitats.	On-site
Coccyzus americanus occidentalis	California yellow-billed cuckoo	CT	Dense willow thickets and riparian corridors. Very uncommon.	Not expected on-site
Elanus leucurus	Black-shouldered kite (White-tailed kite)	CSC; CP	Open country including grasslands, agricultural.	Expected
Falco mexicanus	Prairie falcon	CP	Open country, prairies, and occasionally woodlands; uncommon.	Not expected on-site
Falco sparverius	American kestrel	CP	Many habitats, including urban areas.	On-site
Gymnogyps californianus	California condor	FE/CE	Historic foraging and nesting habitat throughout Ventura County. Nearly extinct in wild.	Not expected on-site

TABLE 6.13-1 (continued)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status‡	Habitat	Known Occurrence Within Project Vicinity#
Birds (continued)				
Otus Asio	Screech owl	CP	Many habitats, including urban areas	Not expected on-site
Riparia riparia	Bank swallow	CSC	Areas near water and sandy cliffs.	Not expected on-site
Tyto alba	Barn owl	CP	Many habitats	Not expected on-site
Polioptila melanura californica	California black-tailed gnatcatcher (coastal (ssp.)	CSC	Sagebrush mesas and dry coastal slopes.	Not expected on-site
Vireo bellii pusillus	Least Bell's Vireo	CE	Dense willow-dominated riparian thickets.	Not expected on-site
Mammals				
Bassariscus astusus	Ringtail	Special Interest	Rocky habitats with water.	Not expected on-site
Canis latrans	Coyote	NSSE	Open country, including grassland and chaparral; common in rural areas.	On-site

TABLE 6.13-1 (continued)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status‡	Habitat	Known Occurrence Within Project Vicinity*
Mammals (continued)				
Felis concolor	Mountain lion	Special Interest	Rocky habitats.	Not expected on-site
Lynx rufus	Bobcat	Special Interest	Rocky habitats.	Not expected on-site
Taxidea taxus	Badger	CSC	Grasslands; open range areas.	Not expected
Amphibians				
Rana aurora draytoni	Red-legged frog	Federal Candidate Species	Riparian areas with continual water supply.	Not expected on-site

* Project vicinity includes Simi Valley, Simi Hills, and Santa Monica Mountains region. "Sensitive" flora and fauna includes those species listed as threatened or endangered, or candidates for such listing by the California Department of Fish and Game or the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service; and those species considered to be of "special interest" in the area due to their existence at the limit of or beyond their normal range.

‡ California Native Plant Society (CNPS) designations listed herein are those contained in the September 1984 "Inventoray of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California" (Smith, James Payne Jr. and Richard York):

CNPS 1.B = Plants rare or endangered in Califoria and elsewhere.
CNPS-2 = Listed as rare and endangered.
CNPS-3 = Listed as rare, but not endangered.
CNPS-4 = Plants rare in California, common elsewhere.
CR = California rare plant (equals federal "threatened" classification).
Appendix I = Plants considered, but not listed (too common).

FE = Listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
CE = Listed as endangered by the California Department of Fish and Game.
CT = Listed as threatened by the California Department of Fish and Game.
CSC = CDF&G Species of Special Concern.
CP = California protected (all raptors).

Special Interest = Considered of local interest due to uniqueness of species occurrence.
NSSE = National Species of Special Emphasis (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designation).

Notes regarding occurrences within project vicinity in some cases include historic records (i.e., California condor, California Yellow-billed cuckoo, and Least Bell's vireo); however, no recent sightings of these protected species are available, nor are they expected to occur any longer at the site.

- The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) - "Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California" - compilation of distributional and abundance data through which plants that are not currently protected may become officially listed as threatened or endangered. This is the state's "watch list" of sensitive plants.

- The Audubon Society Blue List includes native declining bird species. This listing is used as a "watch list" of sensitive bird species, but does not confer legal protection on those species listed. Because the list is a compilation of information obtained through member polls and not through careful scientific research, the list often reflects strong regional trends (usually eastern U.S.) that may not apply to the area under consideration. This list is, therefore, not generally used for habitat analysis or impact assessment.

6.13.2 Impact Assessment

6.13.2.1 Flora

Expansion Area. Development of the landfill into the proposed expansion area would result in the direct removal of 77 acres of ruderal grassland and coastal sage scrub vegetation. The majority of the affected area (about 80 percent) is within the grassland community. No oak trees, sensitive species, or riparian areas would be affected by the expansion.[a] The sensitive wildlife listed on Table 6.13-1 includes highly mobile species (e.g., raptors and coyotes) which are expected to avoid the site during peak activity periods, and which would utilize the site for hunting and foraging. Project development would result in an insignificant impact to the vegetation because of the highly disturbed condition of flora to be removed, and because extensive areas of similar habitat occur in the project vicinity.

Alternative Access Route. At least two coast live oaks are present within the estimated construction limits of the access roadway. These trees would likely be removed resulting in an unavoidable adverse impact if the access road is not realigned. It must be noted that, although these trees have already been somewhat affected by previous grading and road construction activities (and, therefore, offer low to moderate wildlife values), their removal is still controlled by City of Simi Valley and Ventura County policies.

The majority of other affected vegetation in the construction area is ruderal grassland, with a small area of coastal sage scrub. Impacts to these communities are insignificant.

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[a] The Catalina mariposa lily was identified on the project site. It is not currently considered as rare by the CNPS and has been down-listed to Appendix I of the CNPS inventory, because it is considered too common.

Grading within this area may result in indirect adverse impacts to oak trees adjacent to the construction area. Precise effects cannot be determined without detailed grading plans; however, grading could impact the root zones of nearby oaks, and would change localized drainage patterns and alter soil permeability. Oak trees are very sensitive to alterations to ground conditions within their drip lines. Potential long-term impacts to the oaks due to truck usage of this roadway include vibration (resulting in soil compaction and subsequent alteration to soil profile and drainage patterns), and generation of dust and exhaust emissions. The number of additional oaks that could be adversely affected by these indirect impacts of construction grading cannot be accurately determined at this time, but would likely entail only one or two trees. These potential impacts are insignificant and could be easily avoided through proper mitigation.

6.13.2.2 Fauna

Expansion Area/Alternative Access Route. Project development would have a small but insignificant impact on the few wildlife species present within the site. These animals would be displaced into surrounding similar habitats, which can easily absorb these few additional animals. No endangered, protected, or sensitive species would be adversely affected by project development due to their mobility. Large animal (coyote, deer, etc.) migration corridors would not be affected by site development, because adjacent areas are more suitable and the site is presently little utilized for wildlife movement. Additional species are not expected to be attracted to the landfill expansion area.

6.13.3 Cumulative Impacts

No potentially significant cumulative biologic impacts were identified that would occur as a result of the proposed landfill expansion and proposed development in the project vicinity. This determination was based on the finding that project site and surrounding potential development areas have been previously disturbed by grazing, oil development or other activities and/or do not provide unique habitat values.

6.13.4 Mitigation Measures

Measures Proposed by Applicant. None.

Additional Measures Recommended by This EIR. The only significant adverse impact to flora and fauna identified to result from the proposed project is the direct removal of two oak trees by construction of the access road. These trees have already been removed as part of the current access road construction. Given the approved grading limits of the roadway, this impact was unavoidable. The following measures are recommended to ensure other potential impacts are avoided or reduced to insignificant levels.

- The two oak trees have already been removed; this impact should be offset through the replacement of the trees on a 3 to 1 ratio.
- Final grading plans for the proposed access road should be reviewed by landscape architect to ensure that adequate long and short-term protection measures for any other oak trees in the area are provided.

- Inactive portions of the landfill should be revegetated with a native seed mix applied as a hydroseed prior to the start of the rainy season in order to reduce dust emissions and erosion.