Historic Biological Reports
Scan Control Sheet

County Project Number(s): IT-5291

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

Report Date (Month/Day/Year): 09/05/2002

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

COUNTY OF VENTURA
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: September 5, 2002
Requestor: USA Petroleum Corporation
Project: TT-5291, Subdivision and removal of abandoned oil refinery for Business Park

Field Study: ☐ Yes ☒ No
Justification: Known sensitive species issues. EIR previously required for redevelopment of project site.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect N	LS	PS-M	PS	Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect N	LS	PS-M	PS
a. endangered, threatened, or rare species	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒
b. wetland habitat	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒
c. coastal habitat	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒
d. migration corridors	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒
e. locally important species/communities	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒

Degree of Effect Explanation
N= No effect
LS = Less than significant effect
PS-M = Potentially Significant effect; Mitigation incorporated for a ND
PS = Potentially Significant effect; EIR required

B. DISCUSSION

The proposed project consists of the subdivision of a 24-parcel site in Ventura County, California for future construction of a business park. The site is currently a non-operational oil refinery, which includes an unused tank farm and office buildings. Most of the site is bare, hard-packed dirt with several rows of landscaping trees. The project site is neighbored by an abandoned school site to the north, an industrial site to the south, Highway 33 to the east, and the Ventura River to the west.

Project implementation is expected to include the dismantling and removal of the existing abandoned refinery structures, grading of 60 or more acres of the site, improvements to Crooked Palm Road, installation of water and sewer utilities, and re-subdivision of the site into 45 parcels for future construction. Although no specific development plans are available at this time, development is assumed to include future construction of buildings for a business park. Remediation of soils is also anticipated as part of the development process.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) with a data set of April 2002 listed several special-status species that could be present within habitats adjacent to the site. Thirteen animal species were included: California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*), western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), California least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) , bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii*), Belding's savannah sparrow(*Passerculus sandwichensis* var. *beldingi*), southern steelhead trout ESU

(*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*), San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida* var. *lepida*), silvery legless lizard (*Aniella p. pulchra*), and coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*). Eight important habitats were listed: southern California coastal lagoon, southern California steelhead stream, southern coastal salt marsh, coastal and valley freshwater marsh, southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern sycamore alder riparian woodland, southern riparian scrub, and California walnut woodland. Two insects were listed: sandy beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis*) and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Eleven plant species were included: Orcutt's pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula*), southern tarplant (*Hemizonia parryi*), Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*), aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*), Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana*), Miles's milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus*), salt spring checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*), salt marsh bird's-beak (*Cordylanthus maritimus*), Sanford's arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii*), and late-flowered mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii*). Table 1 lists several other special status species that could potentially be found in the area.

Table 1. Sensitive Animals in the Project Vicinity

Common Name	Scientific Name	Agency Status
Amphibians		
coast range newt	*Taricha torosa torosa*	CSC
western spadefoot toad	*Scaphiopus hammondi*	FSC, CSC
Reptiles		
coastal western whiptail	*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*	FSC, CSC
southwestern pond turtle	*Clemmys marmorata* ssp. *pallida*	FSC, CSC
coastal patch-nosed snake	*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*	FSC, CSC
two-striped garter snake	*Thamnophis hammondi*	FSC, CSC
Birds		
Cooper's hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*	CSC (nesting)
sharp-shinned hawk	*Accipiter striatus*	CSC (nesting)
white-tailed kite	*Elanus leucurus*	CFP
northern harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	CSC (nesting)
merlin	*Falco columbarius*	CSC
ferruginous hawk	*Buteo regalis*	CSC (winter)
yellow warbler	*Dendroica petechia* ssp. *brewsteri*	FSC, CSC
loggerhead shrike	*Lanius l. ludovicianus*	FSC, CSC
Bell's sage sparrow	*Amphispiza b. bellii*	FSC, CSC
ashy rufous-crowned sparrow	*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*	FSC, CSC
Mammals		
pallid bat	*Antrozous pallidus*	CSC
pale big-eared bat	*Plecotus townsendi pallescens*	FSC, CSC
California mastiff bat	*Eumops perotis* ssp. *californicus*	FSC, CSC
San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit	*Lepus californicus* ssp. *bennettii*	FSC CSC
American badger	*Taxidea taxus*	SA

CE = California Endangered
CFP = California Fully Protected
CSC = California Species of Concern
SA = California Special Animal
FE = Federal Endangered
FSC = Federal Species of Concern
FT = Federal Threatened
Source: CDFG 2002.

Most of the sensitive plants and animals listed above are not likely to occur within the confines of the old refinery. It is possible that several special status bat species could be present on the project site, as bats are commonly found in abandoned human structures. Therefore, a survey of the project site should be done to determine the presence of bat species. The landscaping trees also could provide habitat for nesting raptors, many of which are listed as sensitive. All raptor nests are protected from take under Section 3503 of the Fish and Game Code and a survey of the site is necessary to determine the potential for such. The southern portion of the site (Lots 36 - 45) is apparently an old field with some native vegetation elements that could contain sensitive species such as the coast horned lizard

and western whiptail. Southwestern pond turtle are located along the Ventura River and could potentially be using this old field area for nesting. Badgers were reported by Hunt (1994, *Ventura River Trail Biological Assessment*) in the vicinity of the project site.

The primary biological concern regarding re-development of the project site is the potential for significant impacts on adjacent important biological resources within the Ventura River. The site is crossed by two small drainages and the Canada Larga barranca, which contains small amounts of riparian vegetation, and may contain minor amounts of wetland. The adjacent Ventura River is primarily vegetated by riparian woodland. The proposed tract map appears to indicate that about 600 feet of the southern drainage will be removed and replaced by a storm drain, a loss of habitat that while minor will require mitigation. The proposed tract map also indicates that additional flood protection for the site will include the installation of partially buried grouted riprap along the Ventura River. From the map, it appears that most of this will be above the existing levee, but some areas of encroachment are shown. The loss of any riparian woodland or encroachment into the active river channel will need to be addressed in an EIR. The effect of construction of this grouted levee also needs to be addressed relative to nesting riparian species that may occur adjacent to the levee.

The possibility of site contamination from remediation efforts being released accidentally into adjacent riparian habitats is a particular concern. Following the completion of remediation, accidental contamination of the river due to spills or operational activities within the individual lots is a concern. The tract map shows the use of water quality control basins to aid in the removal of pollutants, but the concentration of such pollutants within the basin and their transport to groundwater and possible resurfacing downstream needs to be addressed. Long term maintenance of the basin also needs to be addressed. It is vitally important that adequate flood protection is available such that a major flood does not cover the site and transport toxic materials downstream to ecologically important communities. This issue will need to be addressed in the hydrology section of an EIR.

Indirect effects of the project to the adjacent river environment include night lighting and onsite personnel access into the river. The Ventura River is an important wildlife movement corridor and nesting area and spillage of light from the business park could have a significant effect on the use of this area for both.

The following scope is recommended to address the environmentally significant issues.

1. Review of existing documentation of previous environmental analyses and relevant City and County ordinances and General Plans related to biological resources and state and federal agency documents.
2. Review *Least Bell's Vireo and Willow Flycatcher Survey* prepared by Jim Greaves in 1998 for the project site.
3. Characterize the biota of the project site and adjacent river area based on a combination of literature review and field surveys.
4. Prepare detailed vegetation and aquatic habitat maps of the project area, noting the following:
    a. native trees;
    b. presence or likely presence of any sensitive (defined by CEQA to include locally important species) plant and wildlife species near the project site; and

c. estimated boundary of wetlands based on field observations (note that this survey is not intended as a wetland delineation per US Army Corps of Engineers protocol); or review and incorporate COE jurisdictional analysis if available from the applicant.

5. Conduct a field survey of the project site and adjacent river area for endangered species and endangered species habitat.
6. Conduct a field survey of the project site and adjacent river area to detect migrating or nesting birds. The focus of this survey will be to identify the potential presence of any locally or otherwise protected species.
7. Discussion of important wildlife migration corridors.
8. Discuss relevant ongoing habitat restoration and habitat conservation programs that are in effect for the Ventura River and other sensitive habitats in the project area.
9. Conduct a field survey to determine the potential location of habitat for steelhead trout adjacent to the project site.
10. Assess project specific and cumulative impacts on biological resources including the assessment of direct and indirect impacts (human and pet intrusion, night lighting, weed invasion, industrial run-off effects, installation of bank protection, and removal of river habitat for bank protection) to endangered species and sensitive, locally important habitats, and exposure of birds, reptiles and mammals to contaminated materials, e.g., soil spreading for aeration and temporary storage of contaminated soils during remediation. The applicant's preliminary grading and site engineering plans, including plans for bank protection will be used as the basis for the impact evaluation.
11. Quantify direct loss of specific vegetative types, where possible.
12. Evaluate consistency of project with ongoing habitat restoration and habitat protection programs.
13. Evaluate the potential realignment of the Ventura River Pedestrian and Bicycle Trail from the abandoned railroad Right - of - Way to adjacent to the River with respect to impacts on the biological resources of the river.
14. Evaluate effectiveness of mitigation measures and identify potential mitigation sites, if necessary.

C. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	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?	☒	☐
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?	☒	☐
3. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	☒	☐

D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☐ Required for Negative Declaration ☐

An EIR is required.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☐ EIR Required ☒

Reviewer: _____ Date: 9/5/02

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F. REFERENCES

California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001a). *State and Federally Listed Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California.* 16 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Plant Conservation Program

California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001b). *State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California.* 10 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001c). *Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List.* 141 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001d). *Special Animals.* 59 pgs.

County of Ventura (August 3, 1999). *Administrative Supplement to State CEQA Guidelines for the Implementation of California Environmental Quality Act.* 72 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 (November 30, 1998). *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.* Special Reprint, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 50, Part 17, Subpart B.

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.