SECTION B
INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

Job: PMW - 1249

Requester: Debbie Morrisset

Applicant: Richard T. and Susan Nichols

Date: March 26, 2004

Survey Type: Office and Field

Rationale: The applicant proposes to divide two parcels totaling 192.47 acres into four parcels with private access and utility easement from Los Angles Avenue (Highway 118) to the proposed project site.

Site Description: ENSR conducted a field visit of the project site (current A.P.N. # 155-0-207-22 & 24) on March 3, 2004. The 192.47-acre property is located approximately 300 yards south of Los Angeles Avenue (Highway 118) and Aggen Road in unincorporated, Ventura County, California. The project as outlined in application PMW-1249 (project), requests authorization to divide the 192.47 property, which includes dividing the two existing parcels into four parcels with a private access road and utility easement along undisturbed land from Highway 118 to the property. The project site slopes from northwest to southeast and consists mostly of undisturbed coastal scrub plants (see attached site photographs). The site is currently accessed from a graded dirt road which extends across the southern boundary of the subject property. Subsequent development activities would occur within the undisturbed areas of the property, including access enhancements to the existing dirt road and the construction of a new road from Highway 118 to the property (Applicant, Susan Nichols, March 3, 2004). Photographs taken of the subject property during ENSR's site visit are provided in **Appendix A**.

The subject property is proposed to be divided into four areas and the following discussion reflects that division (**Appendix B**). Due to access limitations from recent rainfall, dense vegetation, and the large size of the subject property (192.47) acres, the site visit performed by ENSR was primarily concentrated in the southern half of the subject property. For that portion of the property where we had ready access, we performed a California Rapid Habitat Assessment (CRAM) to estimate the approximate percent vegetation coverage. The northern portion of the property was covered mostly by coastal scrub plants, although the vegetation was observed from a distance for the reasons given above.

Approximately 75 percent of the eastern-most area (Parcel 1) is covered by t annual grasses, with anise (*Pimpinella anisum)*, coastal scrub, and non-native invasive weed species covering the remainder of this parcel. Approximately 30 percent of the two middle areas (Parcel 2 and 3), is covered by annual grasses and weeds species, while approximately 20 percent of these parcels is covered by anise. The remaining 50 percent of these parcels support chaparral plants (coastal scrub), with dominates including coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis)* and chamise *(Adenostoma fasciculatum).* The western-most area (Parcel 4) is the most densely vegetated area of the subject property. The area supports approximately 90 percent chaparral, consisting mostly of coastal scrub plants. In addition, a natural swale exists on the eastern boundary of this area, which separates this proposed parcel from the adjacent Parcel 3. Several plants occur in this natural

swale along the eastern slope of this area that do not exist on the other areas, including seven California pepper trees (*Schinus Molle*), prickly pear cacti (*Opuntia Spp*.), narrow leaf yucca (*Yucca angustissima*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca),* California buckwheat (*Erigonum fasciculatum*) and giant reed (*Arundo donax*). The eastern boundary of this area (Parcel 4) consists of an approximately 40 degree slope.

SECTION C
DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

6. Biological Resources	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			✓				✓	
b. Wetland habitat	✓				✓			
c. Coastal habitat			✓				✓	
d. Migration corridors		✓				✓		
e. Locally important species/ communities			✓				✓	

* N: No impact
LS: Less than significant
PS-M: Potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance
PS: Potentially significant, even after mitigation

Discussion: At the time of the site visit, the subject property was dominated by chaparral plants (primarily coastal scrub), annual grasses, anise and weed species. The predominant coastal scrub plants consist of: coyote brush, tree tobacco, California sagebrush *(Artimisia californica),* whooly blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*), holly-leaved cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*) and chamise. Other vegetation dominating the site during ENSR's site visit includes annual bluegrass, anise, California pepper tree, prickly pear cactus, narrow leaf yucca, California buckwheat and giant reed. A large portion of the site was inaccessible during ENSR's site visit due to dense vegetation and muddy conditions from recent rainfall. This area includes the northern portions of the subject property (Parcels 1-4). From a distance, this area appeared to mostly consist of similar vegetation type and plant community (coastal scrub) as described above.

The site mostly supports habitat typical of dry coastal conditions. The entire proposed project area has the potential to provide habitat and foraging opportunities for a variety of birds, small mammals, and reptiles. These animals typically include mice, reptiles, rabbits, ground squirrels, deer, coyote and some common bird species; however, no wildlife species were observed during the site visit.

a. According to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), several special-status species have the potential to occur within the project site; however, none of the species described below were observed

the day ENSR visited the proposed project site.

Plants:

- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), CNPS List 1B species, is usually found in coastal sage scrub on dry, rocky slopes. Soil is usually sandy or alluvial. This plant blooms from March to May. While the survey occurred during the flowering period for this plant, ENSR did not observe individuals during our site visit. The majority of the property supports a large amount of coastal scrub on sandy soils, although no rocky outcrops were observed within the southern portions of the property. Alternatively, rocky outcrops capable of supporting this species could occur in areas not observed during the site visit. Further, the nearest and most recent documentation of the occurrence of this species within the vicinity of the project area is about 1 mile east of the Camarillo State Hospital in the Santa Monica Mountains, approximately seven miles from the proposed project site. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this rare species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

- Dune larkspur (*Delphinium parryi ssp. blochmaniae*), a federally species of concern, known to occur on rocky areas and coastal dunes. This plant blooms from April to May. This plant species was recorded in Venturan coastal sage scrub, approximately 7 miles south of the proposed project site, a similar habitat as at the proposed project site. Eight plants were recoded at this location in 1989. According to the CNDDB, the primary threat to this species is from grazing. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this rare species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae ssp. blochmaniae*). This species has been placed on the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS's) List 1B. List 1B plants are considered rare, threatened, or endangered and have global and state listing in the CNDDB of G2S2, which means it is rare. This plant blooms from late spring to summer. This species is found in coastal scrub, coastal bluff scrub and valley and foothill grassland. In 1983, thousands of this species were observed along Long Grade Canyon, at the south-side of Potrero Road, southeast of Camarillo State Hospital approximately 7 miles from the subject site. While, this species was not in the areas observed during the day that ENSR visited the site, the survey did not cover the entire site and it was not completed at the optimum time of year. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this rare species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

- Verity's dudleya (*Dudleya verityi*), a federally listed threatened species, found on chapparal, cistomtane and coastal scrub; this species is endemic to Ventura County. This plant blooms from late spring to summer. According to the CNDDB, this species was found on volcanic outcrops in the Santa Monica Mountains. Thousands of this plant species has been observed approximately 7 miles from the subject site, just east of Camarillo State Hospital on rock outcrops. While, this species was not in the areas observed during the day that ENSR visited the site, the survey did not

cover the entire site and it was not completed at the optimum time of year. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

- Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), a state listed rare species, found in chapparal, coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland, and rocky outcrops. This plant blooms in late spring and is endemic to Ventura County. This plant species was observed east of Camarillo State Hospital in rock outcrops in sage scrub (approximately 7 miles from the subject site). There were 100 plants initially seen at the south end of the occurrence site in 1987, however, only eight plants were reported in 1989. While, this species was not in the areas observed during the day that ENSR visited the site, the survey did not cover the entire site and it was not completed at the optimum time of year. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1..**

- Rayless ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*). This species has no federal or state status according to the CNDDB; however, based on the habitat value of this species and its importance to the local biota, this plant is a locally important species to the County of Ventura. This species can be found in coastal scrub and cismontane woodland and along drying alkaline flats. This species was last seen in 1962 in an undisclosed located, within 7 miles of the proposed project site. While, this species was not in the areas observed during the day that ENSR visited the site, the survey did not cover the entire site and it was not completed at the optimum time of year. The coastal scrub community at the proposed project site has appropriate habitat to support this species. Based on this potential to occur at the site, impacts to this species are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

<u>Animals</u>:

- Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*), a federally threatened fish species endemic to the Los Angles basin's southern coastal streams. The property does not support creeks or waterways; therefore, this federally threatened species would not occur at the project site. No impacts would occur to this species.

- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), a state listed endangered species, nests in riparian forests, along the broad, lower flood-bottoms of larger river streams, often mixed with willows and cottonwoods, with the lower story of blackberry, nettles or wild grape. The nearest location of this species to the project site was approximately 20 miles to the north in the Santa Clara River, in Santa Paula, CA. Nesting activity was last reported at the site in Santa Paula in 1904; however, the site was surveyed in 1977 and no birds were detected. The property does not support this species habitat, nor is it likely that this species would occur in the area given the amount of time since its last recorded occurrence; therefore this species is not likely to occur at the project site. Impacts would be considered less than significant.

- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), a federally listed species of concern, is found in rolling foothills

and valleys with scattered oaks and river bottoms or marshes next to deciduous trees. This animal species has been observed along the south-side of the Santa Clara River, east of Santa Paula, less than seven miles northeast of the proposed project site. In 2001, two adults were observed nesting in this area. While the proposed project site does not support the ideal habitat for this species, it could nest in the pepper trees at the site. Therefore, the proposed project has the potential to support this species and impacts are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-2.**

- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), a federally listed threatened species, found in low, coastal sage scrub in arid washes and on mesas and slopes. It is known to be a permanent resident of coastal sage scrub below 2500 feet in southern California. This species has been observed 2.5 miles west of Santa Paula. Because the proposed project site supports the habitat to support this species, the site has the potential to support this species and impacts are considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-2.**

With the exception of the Plummer's mariposa lily, the site visit was not performed at the optimal time for identifying the special status plant species described above. Further, the site visit performed by ENSR was cursory and were not performed at the level of detail necessary to identify both special status plant and animal species that could exist for the entire 192.47 acre property.

b. No wetland habitat was identified on the site or the project area; therefore, disturbance of this type of habitat is not likely to occur.

c. The project supports plants associated with coastal scrub vegetation community. This vegetation community has the potential to support several federally and state listed special status species; therefore impacts to this vegetation community would be considered potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-1.**

d. Agricultural activities occur to the north of the proposed project area beyond which is Highway 118, and immediately to the east of the site are residential neighborhoods. Undisturbed land extends for several acres to the south; however, urban development occurs just beyond these undisturbed areas. To the west are undisturbed land for several acres; however, agricultural activities are interspersed to the west of the project area. Therefore, the habitat within and surrounding the proposed project site does not consist of the amount of habitat necessary to provide shelter and foraging for migrating wildlife, nor is it likely that wildlife other than wildlife endemic to the surrounding area (e.g. deer, coyote, mice, rabbit, reptiles, ground squirrel, etc) would migrate through these undisturbed areas. The loss of a small portion of undisturbed land would not substantially affect the use of the site for migrating purposes, and the area in general is losing open space that can fulfill this function. It is not expected that the proposed project would create significant impacts to migration corridors, therefore, impacts would be considered less than significant.

e. Coastal scrub is a vegetation community found in the area that is considered locally important and disturbance should be limited. A substantial amount of the proposed project area is covered with coastal scrub plants. This vegetation community has the potential to support several federally and state listed special status species, as well as animals endemic to the area which use the site for foraging and shelter.

Because coastal scrub occurs throughout the proposed project site, and is being reduced throughout the County, impacts are considered cumulative and potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance. **See Mitigation Measure MM-3.**

SECTION D
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:		
	YES	**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?		✓

SECTION E
DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation (*check one*):

	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

The undisturbed areas of the property provides habitat for several federally and state listed special status species, as well as coastal scrub vegetation community. The following mitigation measures (**MM**) should be implemented prior to any construction or grading activities to the proposed project site.

MM-1: Prior to ground disturbing activities (grading, surveying, construction, etc.), a pre-construction survey for federally and state and locally important plant species (special status species) shall be conducted by a Ventura County-approved plant ecologist. These surveys shall be performed at the appropriate time of year to identify the presence of special status plant species (e.g. during florescence). If special status species are identified, the Ventura County-approved plant ecologist shall determine the level of protection required for the identified species including the required mitigation ratios for reestablishment of the identified species by the appropriate agencies (Federal: US Fish and Wildlife; State: California Department of Fish and Game; locally important: County of Ventura).

Monitoring:
The County of Ventura will verify inclusion of required mitigation measures on development plans in consultation with a Ventura County-approved plant ecologist.

MM-2: In order to avoid impacts to nesting birds, including birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, initial ground disturbing activities should be limited to the time period between September 1 to March 1 (i.e., outside the nesting season). If initial site disturbance, cannot be conducted during this time period, a pre-construction survey for active nests within the project site shall be conducted by a qualified biologist at the site no more than two weeks prior to any construction activities. If active nests are identified, then all construction work shall be

conducted at least 100 feet from the nests, until the adults and young are no longer reliant on the nest site, as determined by a Ventura County-approved biologist. The Ventura County-approved biologist shall determine the final buffer distance, to be dependant on the species potentially affected.

Monitoring:
The County of Ventura will verify inclusion of required mitigation measures on development plans in consultation with a Ventura County-approved biologist.

MM-3: Prior to ground disturbing activities (grading, surveying, construction, etc.), a pre-construction survey for sensitive and/or locally important vegetation communities such as coastal scrub shall be conducted by a Ventura County-approved plant ecologist. The surveys should assess the amount of vegetation present and the minimum amount that would need to be removed to the greatest extent feasible for the future development of the subject property. The areas that will be disturbed and require the removal of coastal scrub or other locally important plant communities should be revegetated to encourage use of these areas by native plant and animals. Further, the approved plant ecologist shall coordinate with the County of Ventura in determining the level of protection required for the identified plant community including the appropriate mitigation ratios for reestablishment of the vegetation communities identified for removal.

Monitoring:
The County of Ventura will verify inclusion of required mitigation measures on development plans in consultation with a Ventura County-approved plant ecologist.

_____ _____

Greg Ainsworth
Biologist

Date

Appendix A - Photographs

Applicant:	Site Location:	Project No.
Richard and Susan Nichols	Hwy 118 and Aggen Road, Unincorporated Ventura County	PMW - 1249

Photo No. 1	Date: March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing north from Parcel 1.

Description:

View of annual grasses and weed species which are the dominate vegetation in this parcel.

Photo No. 2	Date: March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing west from southern boundary of Parcel 1.

Description:

View of current access road located at southern boundary of property.

Appendix A - Photographs

Applicant:	Site Location:	Project No.
Richard and Susan Nichols	Hwy 118 and Aggen Road, Unincorporated Ventura County	PMW - 1249

Photo No.	Date:
3	March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing north from Parcel 2.

Description:

View of existing vegetation in Parcel 2, which predominantly consists of annual grasses and weeds, as well as anise plants.

Photo No.	Date:
4	March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing southwest from southern boundary of Parcel 3.

Description:

View of access road and vegetation density within Parcel 3 (foreground) and Parcel 4 (background).

Appendix A - Photographs

Applicant:	Site Location:	Project No.
Richard and Susan Nichols	Hwy 118 and Aggen Road, Unincorporated Ventura County	PMW - 1249

Photo No. 5	Date: March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing north from between Parcel 2 and Parcel 3.

Description:

View of coastal scrub plant community which comprises much of the subject property.

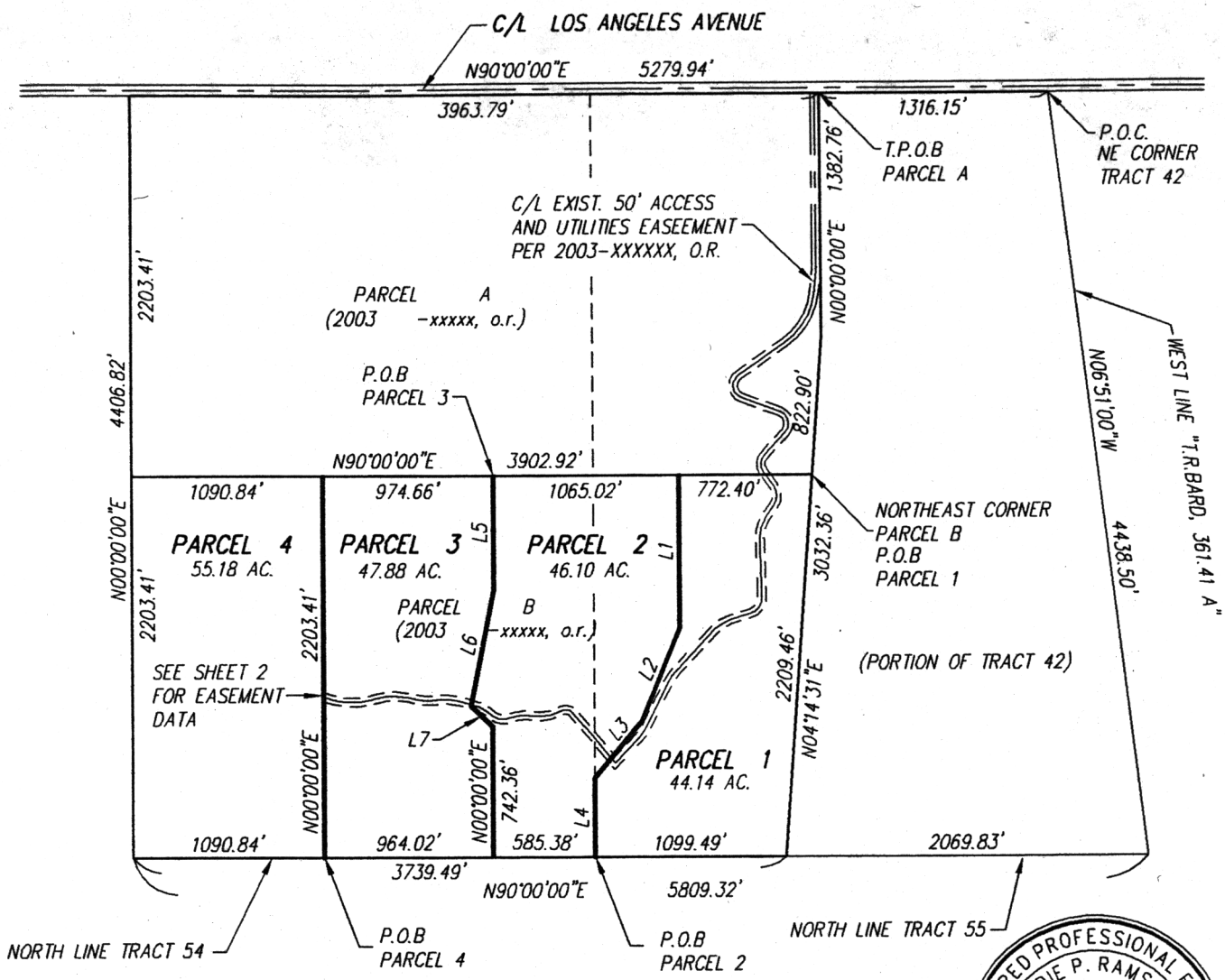
Photo No. 6	Date: March 3, 2004

Direction of Photo:

Facing west southwestern boundary of Parcel 3.

Description:

View of eastern slope of Parcel 4, natural swale with pepper trees and coastal scrub, and current condition of access road.



LINE TABLE		
LINE	BEARING	DISTANCES
L1	N00°00'00"E	877.90'
L2	N22°11'56"E	585.02'
L3	N39°44'31"E	421.52'

LINE	BEARING	DISTANCES
L4	N00°00'00"W	459.74'
L5	N00°00'00"W	647.17'
L6	N11°05'33"E	691.24'
L7	N45°00'43"W	172.87'

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER
EDDIE P. RAMSEYER
No. 26362
Exp. 3-31-06
CIVIL
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

	EXIST. AREA	PROP. AREA
PARCEL B	193.29 AC.	
PARCEL 1		44.13 AC.
PARCEL 2		46.10 AC.
PARCEL 3		47.88 AC.
PARCEL 4		55.18 AC.

0' 500' 1000' 2000' 3000'

SCALE: 1" = 1000'

EXHIBIT "B"

RAMSEYER AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

CIVIL ENGINEERS - LAND PLANNERS - SURVEYORS

(805) 654-1088
FAX: (805) 654-8013

1881 KNOLL DRIVE
VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93003

W.O. 1371

SKETCH OF

PARCEL MAP WAIVER NO. ____

(LOT LINE ADJUSTMENT)

BY: JLC DATE: 10-21-03

CK'D: EPR SHEET 1 OF 3