

California Environmental Quality Act Environmental Checklist Form
Biological Resources, County of Ventura, Planning Division

PROJECT REFERENCE NO.: APN 040-0-010-52, Proposed Parcel Map No. 5311	PROJECT PLANNER: Bruce Keller
DATE: 7 December 2001	PROJECT BIOLOGIST: Carl G. Thelander, BioResource Consultants, P.O. Box 1539, Ojai, 93024 Ph.# 805-646-3932

PROJECT LOCATION: The project is located east of Ojai Valley, north of Highway 150, and on both sides of Koenigstein Road. The parcel being divided is comprised of 140.6 acres.

PROJECT ADDRESS: c/o Trexon Investment, LLC, Jim Exon, P.O. Box 1445, Ojai CA 93024

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: Divide parcel into seven parcels with proposed home sites on each. All parcels will meet the minimum of 20 acres per parcel. Grading is required at several locations. Water will be provided by wells, which are to be developed on-site. Septic systems will be used at each homesite. Existing roads to the proposed building sites will be used wherever possible, with necessary improvements being made as warranted.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: I conducted a field visit to the site, accompanied by Jim Exon, on 3 December 2001. The general setting is a mix of disturbed (ruderal) habitats, several native vegetation communities, and rural housing. A search of the RareFind 2 California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB 1999: California Department of Fish and Game, USGS Ojai and Santa Paula Peak Quads) revealed that several special-status plant and wildlife species occur in the general vicinity of the project site. No specific CNDDB records pertain to resources on the project site itself.

Portions of the area are heavily disturbed due to a history of oil well development at specific drill sites within boundaries of the parcel. Several of the proposed building sites are associated with these previously disturbed areas and access roads already exist. Along Koenigstein road are several homes situated on neighboring parcels. These properties were built many years ago and are permanently occupied.

Several creek drainages on the parcel support riparian vegetation, including willow-sycamore woodland. It appears that at least one creek has water flowing much of the year, if not perennially.

The types of habitats and vegetation communities present include, but are not limited to: California annual grasslands, ruderal grasslands, coastal sage scrub, and other scrub types including California sagebrush, mixed sage, and coyote brush scrub. Arroyo willow-California sycamore vegetation is present along at least one stream course on the parcel. A few remnant oaks (Coast Live Oak series) occur on the project but these are not expected to be disturbed based on the proposed building sites and roads.

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The parcel can be expected to support an assemblage of wildlife species typical for this region of California, and specifically northern Ventura County. California quail, scrub jays, wrentits, greater roadrunner, great horned owl, black phoebe, California towhee, coyote, gray fox, and bobcat are all species likely to occur on site. The area probably is frequented by mountain lions, a relatively common predator in the foothills adjacent to Los Padres National Forest lands.

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IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:	PROJECT IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT ¹				CUMULATIVE IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
What level of impact will the proposal have on:								
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	
<i>Will the proposal:</i>								
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?			X				X	
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?			X				X	
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetland as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	X				X			
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?			X				X	
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	X				X			
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	X				X			

¹ N = No Impact; LS = Less Than Significant; PS-M = Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation Incorporated; PS = Potentially Significant Impact.

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Additional comments or explanations:

Because of the timing of the field visit, it is not possible at this time to determine the presence/absence of plants and wildlife potentially listed as endangered, threatened, rare, or otherwise designated as sensitive species. Habitat typically associated with sensitive resources occurs on the property in several of the proposed new parcels. The present assessment assumes that one or more sensitive plant/wildlife species may occur on the property, given the known distribution of sensitive plants in the region and the quality of the habitat present on portions of the parcel.

In general, the proposed development should not have a significant impact on biological resources present in the region. Project related impacts to native vegetation communities (and possibly sensitive resources) may be significant in portions of the parcel. However, it is likely that, given the relatively large size of the new parcels in comparison to the small amount of surface area being proposed for development in each, there appears to be ample opportunity to mitigate any project impacts to less than significant. This determination can only be made following a survey conducted at the proper time of year (see below for survey recommendations).

Item A. Habitat conditions are present that could support one or more sensitive, threatened, rare, or otherwise listed plant or wildlife species. If sensitive resources are determined to be present, the project impacts can be reduced to less than significant through on-site mitigation.

Item B. There appears to be no wetland habitat present within the parcel boundaries. Most of the property is situated on relatively steep slopes. The proposed building sites are generally situated in disturbed areas, or non-wetland areas. Therefore, no adverse impacts to wetlands are expected.

Item C. The parcel is not located in the coastal zone. Therefore, no impacts are expected.

Item D. The parcel contains extensive native vegetation that allow for wildlife movements. This is especially true for wildlife moving to and from the nearby Los Padres National Forest lands. However, any impacts to movement corridors can be largely offset by retaining as much native vegetation as possible in areas not developed for home sites, access roadways, and other buildings/facilities within the seven proposed building sites (see proposed parcel map).

Item E. It is likely that surveys of the property will reveal one or more locally important species or communities. For example, coastal sage scrub vegetation is present, a habitat often associated with California gnatcatchers, a federally-listed species. However, the project occurs in a region of Ventura County that is generally considered outside that species' known range. Based on known habitat-wildlife associations, it appears that suitable habitat is present on-site for several sensitive species including San Diego horned lizards, San Diego desert woodrats, and others. Impacts from the project to any sensitive species determined to be present, or to habitat likely to support them, typically can be reduced to less than significant by ensuring the suitable habitat remains undisturbed in perpetuity in the remaining portions of the seven parcels where buildings and other improvements/land uses are not explicitly permitted (i.e., outside the specific building sites and access roads delineated on the final parcel map).

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Recommendations:

- 1- A qualified biologist familiar with sensitive natural resources of northern Ventura County, especially plants, needs to conduct a general reconnaissance survey during the optimal time of the year when such species are most readily detected. The boundaries of native plant communities need to be identified and each habitat type quantified. This generally requires one visit in March or early April, and a second survey in May or early June. The surveys should be scheduled to maximize the likelihood of detecting sensitive species that may be present on the property.
- 2- Based on the findings of the surveys recommended in No.1 (above), suitable native vegetation and wildlife habitat not involved in developing the proposed access roads, wells, home sites and nearby ancillary buildings, landscaping, etc., should be set aside by easement or deed restriction for protection to the fullest extent possible from future disturbance or degradation. This includes activities such vegetation clearing, equestrian or livestock grazing, or other uses that would degrade the native vegetation already present, promote soil erosion, or otherwise significantly impact the habitat values to support sensitive plants and wildlife, including wildlife movements.

FOOTNOTE: A large majority of each proposed parcel apparently will not be disturbed for development of housing, utilities, access, wells, landscaping, etc. However, owners of the new parcels may chose to further modify a greater portion each new parcel, thus causing future decreases in overall habitat values in the area. To ensure that such secondary impacts do not occur, the applicant may elect to forego conducting the surveys described above in those portions of each parcel where no development is proposed for homes sites, associated buildings, landscaping, wells, or access roads. Instead, the applicant may elect to dedicate as permanent open space, through conservation easements or other similar deed restrictions, those undeveloped areas on each parcel that currently support native vegetation and are outside the boundaries of the proposed seven building sites, the necessary well sites, utility corridors, and the access roads. Such a designation would almost certainly offset the possible impacts to plants and wildlife due to habitat loss resulting from the proposed development within the seven parcels. Such a permanent designation as open space would ensure that the undeveloped portions of each parcel would maintain their habitat quality for native plants and wildlife.

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D. <u>MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>	<u>Yes/Maybe</u>	<u>No</u>
Based on the information contained with Section B6:		
1. Does the project have the potential to 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 major periods of California's history or prehistory?	x	
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 that occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time while long-term impacts will endure well into the future.)		x
3. Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effect of other current projects, and the effect of probable future projects. (Several projects may have relatively small individual impacts on two or more resources, but that total of those impacts on the environment is significant.)		x
4. Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		x

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E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I find the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environmental, there would not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measure(s) described in section C of the Initial Study will be applied to the project. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find the proposed project, individually and/or cumulatively, MAY have a significant effect on the environmental, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environmental, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.



Carl G. Thelander

7 December 2001

Date