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15 July 2003

Debbie Morrisset
Ventura County Planning Division
800 South Victoria Avenue, L#1740
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: M. Herschal Hasler, Jr. Project Biological Survey Results & Mitigation Recommendations

Dear Ms. Morrisset:

This letter provides a summary of the results of the biological resources assessment, conducted by David Magney Environmental Consulting (DMEC), at the property of M. Hershal Hasler, Jr. (Hasler property). DMEC conducted a pre-construction biological survey of the Hasler property to identify and assess all botanical and faunal resources onsite, including special-status plant and wildlife species. DMEC biologists, Cher Batchelor and Rita DePuydt, conducted biological surveys of the project site on 14 July 2003. The impact areas of the Hasler property, proposed for grading and earthwork activities, were walked over thoroughly to account for all observable plant and wildlife species. Global Positioning System (GPS) units were carried to track footpaths and to mark waypoints of significant findings.

The project site is located on Wells Road off Yellow Hill Road, which is off Yerba Buena Road, in the Santa Monica Mountains of Ventura County. More specifically, the Hasler property is located at NE¼, SW¼, NE¼, Section 14, T1S, R20W, Triunfo Pass, California Quadrangle (USGS 7.5-minute Series Topographic Map). The project site occurs on a steep, south-facing slope in a highland area of the Santa Monica Mountains at approximately 1,150 feet in elevation. The vegetation type present onsite is Mixed Chaparral (Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest is present across the drive opposite the project site).

Below is a summary of DMEC's assessment of the biological resources of the Hasler property. Also included below are recommendations for appropriate mitigation measures to compensate for impacts to special-status plant and wildlife species and sensitive habitat types.

BOTANICAL RESOURCES

The botanical resources of Hasler property include the vascular plant taxa that occupy the landscapes of the area, referred to as the flora. The flora of any given area is dependent on the physical factors of the area, including geology, soils, elevation, prevailing winds, climate and weather, and cultural practices.

The flora consists of both common and rare species. Some plants have been formally listed by the California and federal governments and provided full legal protection. Others have simply been listed and tracked by various organizations and scientists, but have not been given legal protection under either the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), or its precursor,

the California Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA). For the sake of discussion, all rare plants are referred to as special-status species, whether listed or not.

The general vegetation types, flora, and special-status species known or likely to occur at the Hasler property are described briefly below.

Vegetation Types

The **Mixed Chaparral** onsite is predominated by tall, evergreen, fire-adapted shrubs including *Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *megacarpus* (Bigpod Ceanothus), *Malosma laurina* (Laurelleaf Sumac), and *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *laxiflorus* (Lax-flowered Bush Mallow), while associate chaparral shrub species include *Adenostoma fasciculata* (Chamise), *Ceanothus spinosus* (Greenbark Ceanothus), *Heteromeles arbutifolia* (Toyon), *Rhamnus ilicifolia* (Hollyleaf Redberry), and *Rhus ovata* (Sugar Bush). Important lower-growing, drought-deciduous shrubs, typical of Coastal Sage Scrub plant communities, include *Artemisia californica* (California Sagebrush), *Encelia californica* (California Encelia), *Eriogonum cinereum* (Gray Coast Buckwheat), *E. fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum* (Leafy California Buckwheat), *Mimulus longiflorus* ssp. *longiflorus* (Sticky Bush Monkeyflower), and *Salvia mellifera* (Black Sage). The ground layer consists of predominantly *Artemisia douglasiana* (Mugwort), *Eriophyllum confertiflorum* var. *confertiflorum* (Golden Yarrow), *Gnaphalium* spp. (everlastings), *Nassella lepida* (Foothill Needlegrass), and *Phacelia cicutaria* (Caterpillar Phacelia). Several species of nonnative annual grasses and annual and perennial herbs were also observed onsite.

Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest is dominated by Quercus agrifolia ssp. agrifolia (Coast Live Oak), and includes understory species such as *Baccharis salicifolia* (Mulefat), *Rosa californica* (California Wild Rose), and *Toxicodendron diversilobum* (Poison Oak). The California Department of Fish & Game California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB)[1] lists this habitat with a Global- and State-Rank of 4 (G4, S4). Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest does not occur within the immediate construction zone (impact area), as it exists across the access road from the project site; however, this habitat type is sensitive and should be avoided at all times.

Flora

The Hasler property flora consists of at least 65 vascular plant taxa. Forty-eight (48) of those 65 are native plant species. Species richness and diversity are high onsite and the project site represents a high quality portion of the Santa Monica Mountains chaparral habitat. All vascular plants observed at the Hasler property are listed in Table 1, Vascular Plants Observed at the Hasler Property.

[1] California Natural Diversity Database. 2002. RareFind2 GIS Database of Known Occurrences of Special Natural Communities and Plants of California. 4 October 2002. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.

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Table 1. Vascular Plant Species Observed at the Hasler Property

Scientific Name[2]	Common Name[3]	Habit[4]	Family
Adenostoma fasciculata	Chamise	S	Rosaceae
*Anagallis arvensis**	Scarlet Pimpernel	AH	Primulaceae
Artemisia californica	California Sagebrush	S	Asteraceae
Artemisia douglasiana	Mugwort	PH	Asteraceae
*Avena barbata**	Slender Wild Oat	AG	Poaceae
Baccharis pilularis	Coyote Brush	S	Asteraceae
Baccharis salicifolia	Mulefat	S	Asteraceae
*Brassica nigra**	Black Mustard	AH	Brassicaceae
Brickellia californica	California Brickellbush	S	Asteraceae
Bromus diandrus	Ripgut Grass	AG	Poaceae
*Bromus hordeaceus**	Soft Chess	AG	Poaceae
Bromus madritensis ssp. *rubens**	Red Brome	AG	Poaceae
Calystegia macrostegia ssp. *cyclostegia*	Morning-glory	PV	Convolvulaceae
Calystegia macrostegia ssp. *intermedia*	Intermediate Morning-glory	PV	Convolvulaceae
Camissonia californica	Mustard Primrose	AH	Onagraceae
Ceanothus megacarpus var. *megacarpus*	Bigpod Ceanothus	S	Rhamnaceae
Ceanothus spinosus	Greenbark Ceanothus	S	Rhamnaceae
*Centaurea melitensis**	Tocalote	AH	Asteraceae
Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae	**Island Mountain Mahogany**	**S**	**Rosaceae**
Chamaesyce albomarginata	**Rattlesnake Spurge**	**PH**	**Euphorbiaceae**
*Chamaesyce maculata**	Spotted Spurge	AH	Euphorbiaceae
Conyza canadensis	Horseweed	AH	Asteraceae
Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *setigerus	**Dark-tipped Rigid Bird's Beak**	**AH**	**Scrophulariaceae**
*Cynodon dactylon**	Bermuda Grass	PG	Poaceae
Deinandra [Hemizonia] fasciculata	Fasciculed Tarplant	AH	Asteraceae
Encelia californica	California Encelia	S	Asteraceae
Eriogonum cinereum	gray Coast Buckwheat	S	Polygonaceae
Eriogonum fasciculatum var. *foliolosum*	Leafy California Buckwheat	S	Polygonaceae
Eriogonum fasciculatum var. *polifolium*	Hoary California Buckwheat	S	Polygonaceae
Eriophyllum confertiflorum var. *confertiflorum*	Golden Yarrow	PH	Asteraceae
*Erodium cicutarium**	Redstem Filaree	AH	Geraniaceae
*Foeniculum vulgare**	Sweet Fennel	PH	Apiaceae
Gnaphalium bicolor	Bicolored Everlasting	PH	Asteraceae

[2] Scientific nomenclature follows Hickman (1993), Skinner and Pavlik (1994), Gordon-Reedy (1990), and Broich (1987). "*" indicates non-native species which have become naturalized or persist without cultivation. **Bold type** indicates special-status plant species.

[3] Common names follow Abrams and Ferris (1960), Neihaus and Ripper (1976), and DeGarmo (1980).

[4] Habit definitions: AG = annual grass; AH = annual herb; BH = biennial herb; PG = perennial grass; PH = perennial herb; PV = perennial vine; S = shrub; T = tree.

Scientific Name[2]	Common Name[3]	Habit[4]	Family
Gnaphalium californicum	Green Everlasting	AH	Asteraceae
Hazardia squarrosa var. *squarrosa*	Sawtooth Goldenbush	S	Asteraceae
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon	S	Rosaceae
Heterotheca grandiflora	Telegraph Plant	AH	Asteraceae
*Hirschfeldia incana**	Summer Mustard	BH	Brassicaceae
Hordeum marinum ssp. *gussoneanum**	Mediterranean Barley	AG	Poaceae
Leymus condensatus	Giant Wildrye	PG	Poaceae
Lotus scoparius var. *scoparius*	Deerweed	S	Fabaceae
Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *laxiflorus	**Lax-flowered Bush Mallow**	**S**	**Malvaceae**
Malacothrix saxatilis* var. *commutata	**Cliff-aster**	**PH**	**Asteraceae**
Malacothrix saxatilis var. *tenuifolia*	Cliff-aster	PH	Asteraceae
Malosma laurina	Laurelleaf Sumac	S	Anacardiaceae
*Malva parviflora**	Cheeseweed	AH	Malvaceae
Marah macrocarpus var. *macrocarpus*	Large-fruited Man-root	PV	Cucurbitaceae
Mimulus longiflorus ssp. *longiflorus* *[M. aurantiacus]*	Sticky Bush Monkeyflower	S	Scrophulariaceae
Nassella lepida	**Foothill Needlegrass**	**PG**	**Poaceae**
Phacelia cicutaria var. *hispida*	Hispid Caterpillar Phacelia	AH	Hydrophyllaceae
Phacelia cicutaria* var. *hubbyi	**Hubby Caterpillar Phacelia**	**AH**	**Hydrophyllaceae**
Quercus agrifolia var. *agrifolia*	Coast Live Oak	T	Fagaceae
Rhamnus ilicifolia	Hollyleaf Redberry	S	Rhamnaceae
Rhus ovata	Sugar Bush	S	Anacardiaceae
*Salsola tragus**	Tumbleweed	AH	Chenopodiaceae
Salvia mellifera	Black Sage	S	Lamiaceae
*Silybum marianum**	Milk Thistle	AH	Asteraceae
Solanum xantii var. *xantii*	Chaparral Nightshade	S	Solanaceae
*Sonchus asper**	Prickly Sow-thistle	AH	Asteraceae
*Sonchus oleraceus**	Common Sow-thistle	AH	Asteraceae
Stachys bullata	Pink Hedge Nettle	PH	Lamiaceae
Stephanomeria virgata ssp. *virgata*	Twiggy Wreath Plant	AH	Asteraceae
Toxicodendron diversilobum	Poison Oak	S/PV	Anacardiaceae
Venegasia carpesioides	Canyon Sunflower	S	Asteraceae
Yucca whipplei	Our Lord's Candle	S	Liliaceae

Voucher specimens were collected for some of the observed plant species, according to CNPS and California Department of Fish and Game[5] protocols. Voucher specimens, collected to support the findings of this report, are available for examination and verification at the Herbarium of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT SPECIES

Based on a search of the CDFG CNDDB RareFind2[6] and the California Native Plant Society's *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California*[7], several special-status plant species are expected and known to occur in the vicinity of the Hasler property area. No State or Federally listed plant species were observed onsite; however, one plant of a CNPS List 4 (R-E-D Code 1-1-3) species was observed onsite, *Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae* (Island Mountain Mahogany). Island Mountain Mahogany is an evergreen shrub that blooms February through May, and it is in the Rosaceae (or rose) family. This species is only known from Santa Catalina, Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa Islands and Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. Few occurrences are known on the mainland. This species is found in closed-cone coniferous forest and chaparral plant communities at elevations between 30 and 600 meters. This variety is separated from the more common variety in that Island Mountain Mahogany has six to twelve lateral leaf veins[8].

In addition to Island Mountain Mahogany, a number of Species of Local Concern[9], or plant species with less than ten (10) populations known or recorded within Ventura County, were observed onsite. The Ventura County Species of Local Concern found during the pre-construction biological surveys include approximately:

- 30 plants of *Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *setigerus* (Dark-tipped Rigid Bird's Beak);
- 50 plants of (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *laxiflorus* (Lax-flowered Bush Mallow);
- 50 plants of *Nassella lepida* (Foothill Needlegrass);
- 20 plants of *Malacothrix saxatilis* var. *commutata* (Cliff-aster);
- 15 plants of *Phacelia cicutaria* var. *hubbyi* (Hubby Caterpillar Phacelia); and
- 10 plants of *Chamaesyce albomarginata* (Rattlesnake Spurge).

Figure 1, Special-status Plant Species Locations, indicates where each special-status plant species was observed onsite.

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[5] California Department of Fish and Game. 1991. Annual Report on the Status of California State Listed Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals. The Resource Agency, State of California, Sacramento, California. 191 pp.

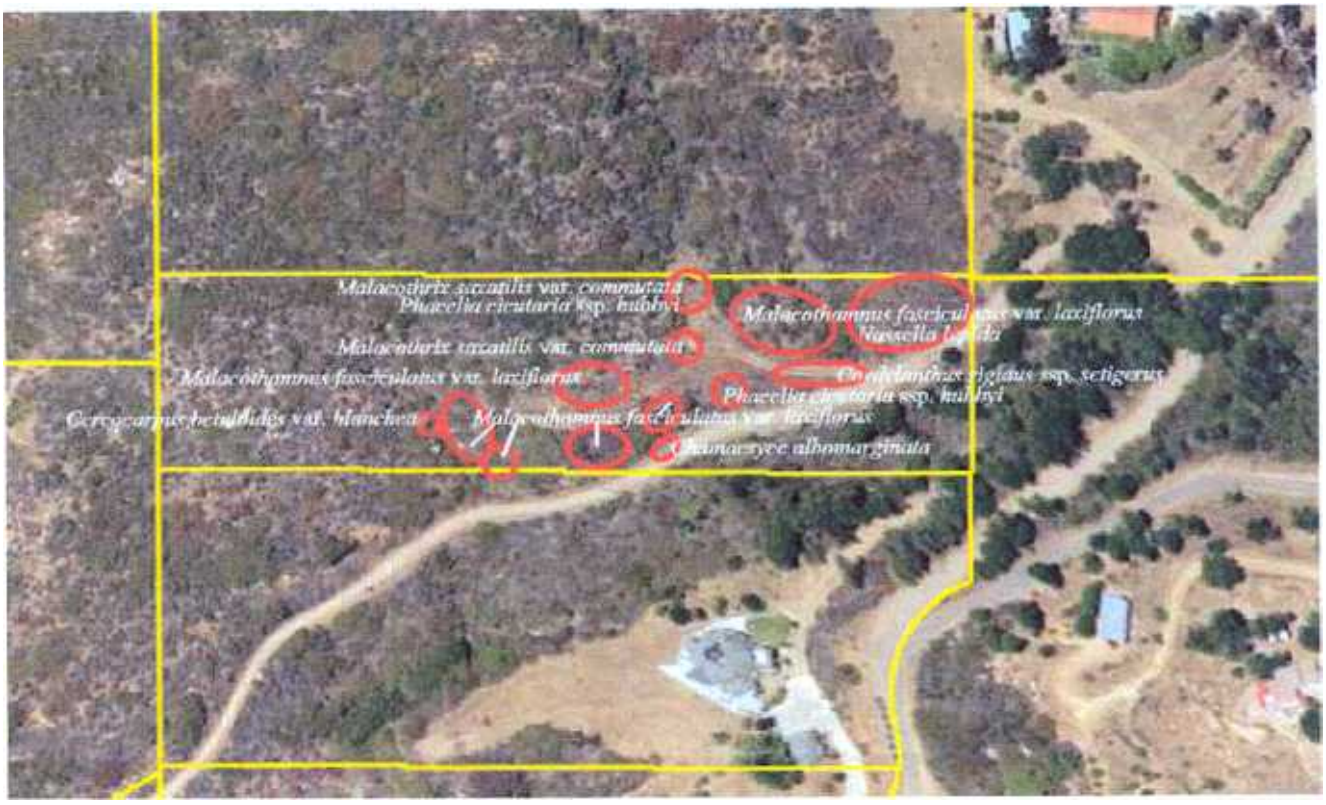
[6] California Natural Diversity Database. 2002. RareFind2 GIS Database of Known Occurrences of Special Natural Communities and Plants of California. 4 October 2002. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.

[7] California Native Plant Society. 2001. *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California*. Sixth edition. (Special Publication No. 1.) Rare Plant Scientific Advisory Committee, David Tibor, Convening Editor, Sacramento, California. September.

[8] Hickman, J. ed. 1993. *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California*. University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

[9] Magney, D.L. 2002. *Checklist of Ventura County Rare Plant Species*. 29 March 2002. California Native Plant Society, Channel Islands Chapter, Ojai, California.

Figure 1. Special-status Plant Species Locations



WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Wildlife resources include the fauna observed onsite including any special-status wildlife species.

FAUNA

The wildlife species observed onsite include: Honey Bee, Blue Butterfly, and Cabbage White Butterfly, Western Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), Bullock's Oriole, Cliff Swallow (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*), Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma caerulescens*), American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*), Mourning Dove, California Quail (*Callipepla californica*), Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*), California Towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*), Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Coyote (*Canis latrans* [scat]), and California Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*). No bird nests were observed within the impact area of the Hasler property.

SPECIAL-STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES

Several special-status wildlife species have potential to occur in the Hasler property area; however, no special-status wildlife species were observed onsite.

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MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Although seven special-status plant species are present at the Hasler property, all impacts to those special-status plant species are mitigable.

Cercocarpus betuloides var. *blancheae* is very uncommon on the mainland, and this species status is CNPS List 4. Impacts to this species is a significant impact; however, the impacts are mitigable by planting this species back onsite after construction activities have ended. DMEC recommends mitigating the loss of this species at a three to one (3:1) ratio, and since only one plant was found onsite, three plantings of this species should be planted and maintained in good health onsite for at least five years after construction activities have ended. It should be noted that Island Mountain Mahogany is best planted by container plantings or by seed. Attempting to grow this species from cuttings is difficult since the shrub is very woody. The Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens propagates Island Mountain Mahogany, and is currently growing this species as container plantings. Therefore, obtaining plantings of this species should not be a problem for mitigation efforts after construction activities.

The remaining six special-status plant species are Ventura County Species of Local Concern, or plant species with less than ten (10) populations known or recorded within Ventura County, and they include *Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *setigerus*, *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *laxiflorus*, *Nassella lepida*, *Malacothrix saxatilis* var. *commutata*, *Phacelia cicutaria* var. *hubbyi*, and *Chamaesyce albomarginata*. All six species are quite common to abundant in areas adjacent to the impact site; therefore, no single population is being lost due to construction activities. Impacts to these species can be made less than significant by planting these six species by seed back onsite after construction activities. DMEC recommends incorporating seeds of the six species in a native indigenous seed-mix to be spread/planted over newly graded and appropriately treated soils in a portion of the project site that will be available for regeneration of those species.

DMEC recommends collecting seeds of the special-status plant species in the immediate vicinity of the project site. Since all six of the Species of Local Concern occur in adjacent areas to the Hasler property, all seeds may be collected onsite to make sure that the genetic integrity of the site remains intact. Seeds may also be obtained from seed suppliers; however, if seeds are obtained from a seed supplier, DMEC recommends that all seeds originate from locations within the Santa Monica Mountains or locations in close proximity to the project site. At the very least the seeds should be indigenous to Ventura County.

Planting should begin this fall (fall of 2003), and an experienced restoration ecologist should assist with the mitigation implementation and should be present onsite during plantings to ensure a successful mitigation effort.

Please let me know as soon as possible if these mitigation recommendations are approved or not, so that Mr. Hasler may commence construction. Please call if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Cher Batchelor, Staff Ecologist