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Biological Survey

Rehwald Property in the Santa Monica Mountains

11490 Serrano Road; APN 701-0-040-080
Ventura County, California
February 1, 2006

Prepared by:
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Prepared for:
The County of Ventura
Resource Management Agency, Planning Division
Andrea Ozdy, Planner

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Description of Property

Location

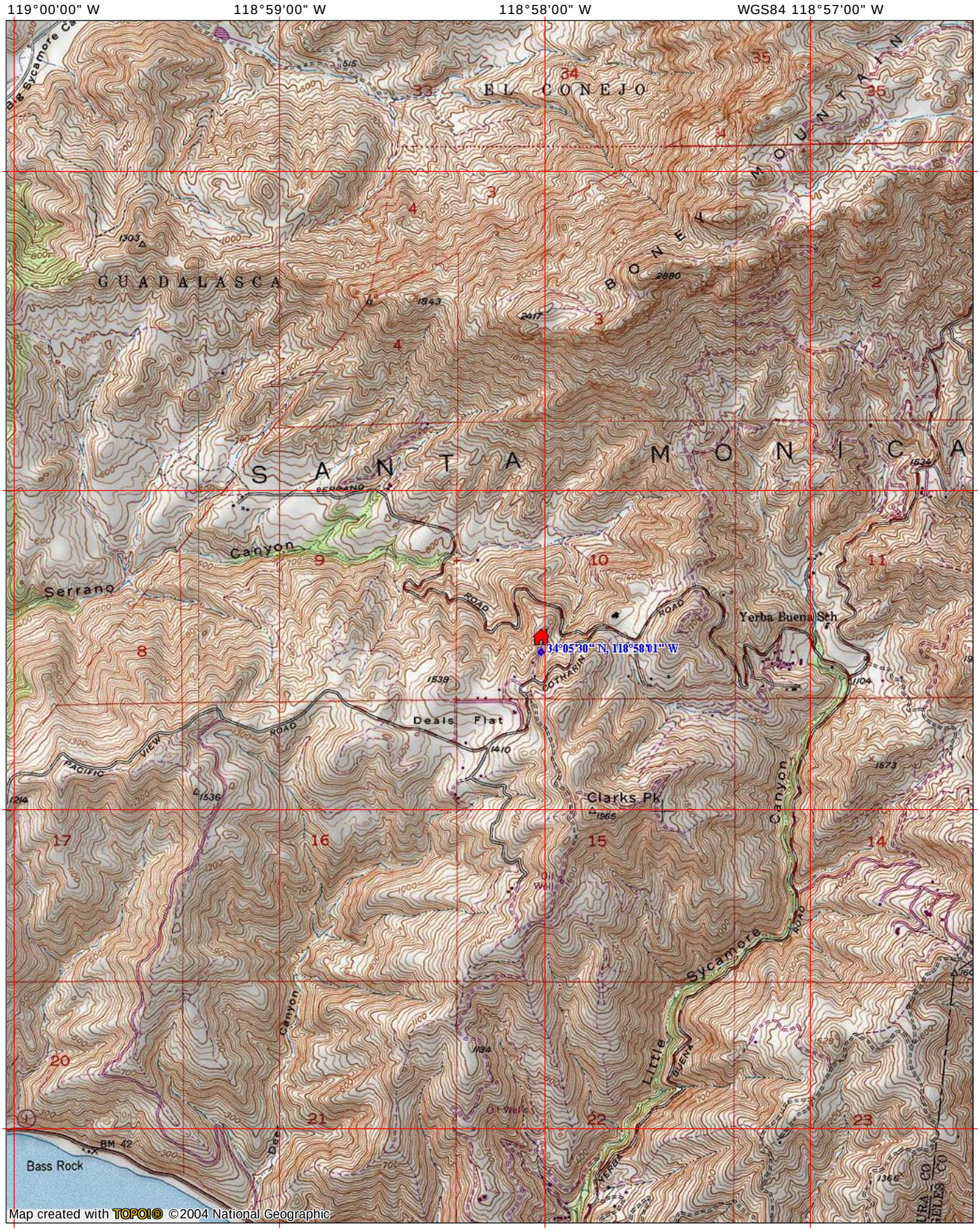
The Rehwald property is located approximately at latitude 34.09158 and longitude -118.96693 (Figure 1) at 11490 Serrano Road in southwestern Ventura County, California. It is situated high in the Santa Monica Mountains at approximately 1,400 feet in elevation and roughly 2.25 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, off of Yerba Buena Road at the intersection of Cotharin Road and Serrano Road. The parcel is identified as APN 701-0-040-044. Little Sycamore Canyon is approximately 1 mile east of the project site. Boney Mountain is 1.2 miles to the north, and Clarks Peak is roughly 0.6 mile to the southeast (Figures 1 and 2). The case planner is Andrea Ozdy (654-2453).

Objective

This report has been prepared for the County of Ventura Resource Management Agency Planning Division in order to identify potential impacts to plant and wildlife species associated with proposed construction of a new single-family home, workshop, dining pavilion, art studio, barn, meditation pavilion and viewing site. All structures are proposed to be built on existing, previously graded pads.

A previous biological survey that focused on botanical resources was prepared for the applicant (David Magney Environmental Consulting [DMEC], 2005a), and a Fuel Modification Plan was prepared by the same authors (DMEC 2005b). This report provides a peer review of these two documents. Condor was asked to visit the site and to prepare the biological resources section of the Initial Study pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Rehwald Project 02/01/06



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

0 .5 1 MILES
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 FEET
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TN MN
13½°
02/01/06

County of Ventura

Prepared by County of Ventura - Information Systems Department - GIS Division

State Plane Coordinate System California Zone V - NAD 27

This map was compiled from records and computations

2004 Aerial Imagery Provided by AirPhotoUSA

100 50 0 100 200 300 Feet

Printed on : November 8, 2005

N W E S

Photo 1. Remains of buildings on the property. *Photo by Elihu Gevirtz.*

Photo 2. Many of these pagoda-like structures stand amidst ornamental landscaping on the developed portion of the property. *Photo by Elihu Gevirtz.*

Existing Conditions

The 55-acre property has been developed with several structures, building pads, roads, extensive landscaping and sculptures, a human-made pond and stream, and other features (Photos 1 and 2). The Green Meadows Fire in 1995 destroyed several buildings on the property (Hertz, 2005). A large percentage of the vegetation on the property consists of undisturbed chaparral and coastal sage scrub (Photos 3 and 4).

A few of the plant species in the chaparral include Bigpod Ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *megacarpus*), Greenbark Ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*), Birchleaf Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *betuloides*), Leafy California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum*), Our Lord's Candle (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*), Lax-leaved Chaparral Bushmallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *laxiflorus*), and others. The Coastal Sage Scrub species include California Sagebrush (*Aretemisia californica*), Coyote Brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), California Brickellbush (*Brickellia californica*), Hoary California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *polifolium*), and others.

Photo 3. Fuel management zone on property.
Photo by Elihu Gevirtz.

Project Summary

The proposed project consists of construction of a main residence and accessory buildings on existing building pads that have a combined area of 10,870 square feet. Anticipated earthwork is estimated to total 2,959 cubic yards of cut and 540 cubic yards of fill (Hertz, 2005).

The objective of the Fuel Modification Plan is to establish defensible space between structures and flammable vegetation. This is planned to be accomplished by removal of a combined total of 2.2 acres of native vegetation and additional acreage of ornamental non-native vegetation around the proposed 14 buildings (David Magney Environmental Consulting, 2005b).

B. Background Research

The California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) and the California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare Plants, for the Triunfo Pass Quadrangle, were reviewed on January 24, 2006 for records of sensitive plant and wildlife species in the vicinity. The results (provided in Appendix 1) indicate a total of 7 plant species and 1 animal species recorded on the 7.5-minute USGS Triunfo Quadrangle as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below. The biological report and fuel management plan (David Magney Environmental Consulting 2005a, 2005b) were also reviewed.

Table 1
Sensitive Plant Species Listed in the Department of Fish and Game CNDDB
Triunfo Quadrangle

Scientific Name	Common Name	Family	Federal Status	State Status	CNPS
Calochortus plummerae	Plummer's mariposa lily	Liliaceae	None	None	1B
Chaenactis glabriuscula var. orcuttiana	Orcutt's pincushion	Asteraceae	None	None	1B
Deinandra minthornii	Santa Susana tarplant	Asteraceae	None	Rare	1B
Dudleya cymosa ssp. ovatifolia	Santa Monica Mountains dudleya	Crassulaceae	Threatened	Noe	1B
Dudlyea cymosa ssp. marcenscens	Marcescent dudleya	Crassulaceae	Threatened	Rare	1B
Eriogonum crocatum	Conejo buckwheat	Polygonaceae	None	Rare	1B
Thelypteris puberula var. sonorensis	Sonoran maiden fern	Thelypteridaceae	None	None	List 2
7	***Total***				

Table 2
Sensitive Wildlife Species Listed in the Department of Fish and Game CNDDB
Triunfo Quadrangle

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	State Status
Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus	southern steelhead	Endangered	None
1	***Total***		

II. BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

Survey Methods

A brief survey focusing on wildlife resources was conducted on foot by Condor biologists Vince Semonsen and Elihu Gevirtz on January 18, 2006 from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Site characteristics, conditions, and all wildlife species observed were noted. Ten power and eight power binoculars were used to observe and identify any animals in and around the property. Animals were noted by site, sound, tracks, and scat. The investigators used potato rakes to turn over boards, concrete, logs and other materials that may be used to shelter small animals. Potato rakes were also used in the chaparral to search for small animals and their sign amongst the vegetation. A hand held GPS unit was used to record the locations of sensitive species and a digital camera was used to

take several photographs of the site. The survey was limited to a representative sampling of the property south of Serrano Road because this is where the development is proposed to be located. The survey was conducted on and around several of the existing building pads, the human-made stream and pond, and less than one acre of chaparral on the site.

Survey Weather Conditions

The weather during the two hour survey was cool and cloudy, with a slight drizzle, moderate to thick fog, and a temperature of 50 degrees F.

A. Wildlife Observations

Wildlife observations on the site are recorded in Table 3. The number of species observed during our brief winter survey is probably much lower than the number that actually occur in the area. The undisturbed chaparral and coastal sage scrub on the property, for example, probably support a diversity of reptiles including California Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum frontale*), Common Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana elegans*), Western Skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), Western Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*[1]), California Striped Racer (*Masticophis lateralis lateralis*), and others.

Table 3
Wildlife Species Observed Onsite

Scientific Name	Common Name
Birds	
Calypte anna	Anna's hummingbird
Sphyrapicus sp.	sapsucker
Aphelocoma californica	Western Scrub Jay
Pipilo crissals	California towhee
Pipilo maculatus	Spotted towhee
Regulus calendula	Ruby-crowned kinglet
Chameaea fasciata	Wrentit
Dendroica coronata	Yellow-rumped warbler
Toxostoma redivivum	California thrasher
Sialia mexicana	Western bluebird
Melospiza melodia	Song sparrow
Thryomanes bewickii	Bewick's Wren
Mammals	
Thomomys bottae	Botta pocket gopher
Neotoma lepida intermedia	San Diego desert woodrat (scat and nest)
Peromyscus maniculatus	Deer mouse
Sylvilagus bachmani	Brush rabbit (scat)
Odocoileus hemionus	Mule deer (tracks)

[1] Observed at Boney Mountain between 1981 and 1986 (De Lisle et. al 1986).

B. Sensitive Wildlife Species

Probable evidence of one sensitive wildlife species: San Diego desert woodrat was observed in two locations on the property. Scat and a probable nest structure were observed against a wall at a building pad (N34.09278 W-118.96714. Scat that probably also belonged to this species was observed in the openings between shrubs in the chaparral elsewhere on the property. (A GPS location was not recorded at the second observation site.)

III. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Nesting and Roosting

No evidence of nesting or roosting by raptors or vultures was observed.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species - Animals

San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) is a Federal Sensitive Species and a State Species of Special Concern. This taxon is not expected to be included on the Updated Mammal Species of Special Concern in California (Brylski, et. al, *in review*). The distribution of this taxon is known to be limited by the availability of suitable nest sites provided by rock outcrops and other features such as (but not limited to) patches of cactus (Zeiner et al. 1990, Collins, *pers comm.* 2006). San Diego desert woodrat is also known to use piles of debris such as pieces of concrete and piles of old bricks (Gevirtz et. al 2005). It is expected to be extant in the undeveloped areas of the Santa Monica Mountains (Collins, *pers comm.* 2006). Since the species is probably relatively common on areas of the property where there are rocks, piles of concrete, man-made structures, etc, that may provide support for nest structures, and possibly also in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub, and because the amount of native vegetation to be removed (2.2 acres) is relatively small in comparison to the amount of vegetation that will remain in its natural condition (greater than 25 acres), the impact of removing a nest built against a wall on or adjacent to an existing building pad or implementation of the fuel management program is not considered significant.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species - Plants

DMEC (2005a) states that no listed species were observed onsite, and that nine Species of Local Concern, or plant species with fewer than ten populations known or recorded within Ventura County were observed onsite. In addition, seven species are listed in the NDDB as occurring within the Triunfo Quadrangle (Table 1). The taxa observed by DMEC all occur commonly in chaparral and/or coastal sage scrub and could be impacted by fuel modification of their habitat including thinning of the vegetation. Because they are abundant in the vegetation on the property, outside of the proposed impact area (DMEC 2005a), the impact of clearing 2.2 acres of vegetation on the 55-acre property is not expected to be significant.

Wetlands

A rocky stream and small pond or pool has been constructed on the property as part of the property owner's landscaping.

Coastal Habitats

The project site is outside of the Coastal Zone.

Habitats Providing Seasonal Concentrations or Migration of Fish and Wildlife

The development is proposed to occur on existing building pads and the fuel management is planned to be implemented only within 100 feet of the development. Thus, impacts to habitats are not expected to be significant.

Locally Important Species and Communities

Please refer to the discussion under Endangered Species.

Mitigation Measures

None are required.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The biological report and fuel management plan prepared by DMEC accurately describe the botanical conditions on the site and plan appropriately and conservatively for fuel management in order to provide protection from wildfire. Because the development is proposed to be located on existing building pads, impacts are expected to be minimal. If development is proposed in the future in areas of undisturbed native vegetation, additional surveys at the appropriate time of year should be conducted for rare species such as Santa Susana tarplant (CNPS List 1B) which tends to grown on rocky outcrops in chaparral, marcescent dudleya (CNPS List 1B) which is reported from chaparral and shaded rocky slopes along Little Sycamore Creek (CNDDB 2006), and animals such as California red-sided garter snake (Thamnophis sirtalis infernalis) which was suggested as probably extinct from the Santa Monica Mountains by DeLisle et al (1986), and is possibly a new species from the Santa Clara River area south (Stebbins 2003).

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the assistance provided by Paul Collins, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History regarding distribution of San Diego desert woodrat.

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