COUNTY OF VENTURA
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: August 28, 2001
Requestor: Debbie Morrisset
Project: CCC 0102 PM 5324 Legalize 20.20-Acre Parcel

Field Study: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Justification: A 20.20-acre parcel would be legalized under the proposed project. No specific development is proposed at this time, although the property may be developed as single-family residence in the future. Access to the site is anticipated to come from the southeast corner based on topography, though it may come from the adjoining parcel to the west.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	S	U	N	LS	S	U
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= None
LS = Less than significant effect
S = Significant effect; MND or EIR required
U = Unknown; EIR required

B. DISCUSSION

The proposed project would legalize a 20.20-acre parcel, Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 701-0-050-210, which is located southwest of the terminus of Serrano Road and north of Pacific View Road, between the Point Mugu State Park to the west and Little Sycamore Canyon to the east, in southern Ventura County, California. The project area is designated Open Space under the Ventura County General Plan and is zoned C-O-S (M), Coastal Open Space-Santa Monica Overlay. Development in the general area is sparse and is primarily scattered residences based upon the aerial photograph provided by the County.

The project area contains relatively steep topography and spans 500 to 1,050 feet of elevation. Soils onsite are of the Hambright, very rocky loam, series (HaG) and are about 14 inches deep above volcanic rock (USDA, 1970). The majority of the vegetation onsite consists of native chaparral/coastal sage scrub vegetation on the hillsides (Figure 1.5.1a in County of Ventura, 1994), while a partially disturbed area is located on and adjacent to the flatter hilltop within the southwestern portion of the project area. While it appears that this area has been disturbed in the past and contains annual grassland, it may also contain native grassland elements. Unnamed blue-line streams traverse the southwest and northeast corners of the property.

Another unnamed blue-line stream associated with Serrano Canyon is located offsite approximately 200 feet to the north of the northern project boundary per the United States Geologic Service Triunfo Pass Quadrangle Map. Riparian habitat is anticipated to be associated with the drainages onsite.

With project implementation, the 20.20-acre parcel would be legalized. Legalization of a parcel in itself would not entail a physical change within the site and would not directly result in physical impacts to biological resources. However, parcel legalization would facilitate the eventual construction of a single residential unit onsite. Given the site topography, it is possible that the homesite would be located at the hilltop in the southwestern portion of the site, which appears to have been disturbed in the past and contains annual, and potentially native, grassland and coastal sage scrub/chaparral based upon the aerial photograph. It is anticipated that brush clearance zones of a minimum of 100 feet in width from the structures would surround the homesite and could potentially affect the adjacent areas of denser coastal sage scrub/chaparral.

Locally important species and communities are potentially present onsite due to the location of the project within the Santa Monica Mountains and its proximity to Little Sycamore Canyon to the east and Point Mugu State Park to the west. An August 2001 search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software identified special-status species that could be potentially present onsite, as they are known within 10 miles of the project area. These include species found in chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland, and riparian areas such as marcescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* spp. *marcescens*), Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), Lyon's pentacheata (*Pentachaeta lyonii*), coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*).

Of these species, only the state and federal endangered Lyon's pentacheata is anticipated as potentially occurring onsite due to the thin volcanic soils present. This species has been documented in the west-central Santa Monica Mountains and western Simi Hills within pocket grasslands that are ecotonal with shrublands and along the edges of trails and roads. Habitat for this species is characterized by a low percentage of total vegetative cover and exposed thin soils that exhibit a microbiotic crust. Potential impacts to Lyon's pentachaeta due to project development would be significant, but mitigable.

Available habitat present at the site is not appropriate for the marcescent dudleya, and the geologic formation at the site (Topanga; Dibblee, 1990) is not associated with Conejo buckwheat. Given the hilltop location, water resources at the site do not appear adequate to support either the southwestern pond turtle or the two-striped garter snake. While Plummer's mariposa lily and western whiptail may be present, the potential for impacts to the regional population of these species would be less than significant.

Waters of the U.S. and associated wetland habitat could be potentially present along the unnnamed drainage within the southernwestern and northeastern portions of the site. Any disturbance within these drainages would require permitting through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and the Regional

Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). If necessary, appropriate mitigation would be required during the regulatory process.

The area is within the coastal zone. The grassland and coastal sage scrub/chapparal present over most of the site are not considered sensitive coastal habitat and no significant effects are anticipated.

The project site could potentially serve as part of a migration corridor between areas within the Point Mugu Sate Park to the northwest and other areas to the north and east in the Santa Monica Mountains. Given the large parcel size, eventual residential development would not significantly impact any exisiting wildlife corridor.

C. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Yes/Maybe	No
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, which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	☐	☒

D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☐ Required for Negative Declaration ☒

A rare plant survey for Lyon's pentacheata and other potential special-status plant species should be conducted in the spring and summer (April - June) prior to development of the parcel by a qualified biologist for areas onsite where ground disturbance may occur.

In the event, Lyon's pentachaeta is identified onsite, the current and anticipated future distribution of the species should be mapped by a qualified biologist. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CDFG, and County of Ventura should be formally notified and consulted regarding the presence of this species onsite and the need for a "take" permit under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts. A preservation and management plan should be prepared for the Lyon's pentachaeta by a qualified biologist and approved by the County of Ventura, CDFG, and USFWS.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☒ EIR Required ☐

Reviewer: _____ Date: August 28, 2001

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F. REFERENCES

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California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001b). State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California. 11 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

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