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# Preliminary Biological Assessment
# Gillibrand Aggregate Mine
# Adjustment of Mining Operations Area
# Simi Valley, California
# APN No. 615-0-070-105 and 615-0-080-855
# CUP No. 1367-4

**Prepared by:**
**Elihu Gevirtz and Vince Semonsen**

**Prepared for:**
**The County of Ventura**
**Resource Management Agency**
**Planning Division**
**Scott Ellison, Planner**

**October 24, 2005**

## Introduction

The Resource Management Agency Planning Division of the County of Ventura is processing an application by P.W. Gillibrand Co., Inc. to exchange an existing, approved mining area for adjusting the mining boundary. The Case Planner is Scott Ellison (805) 654-2495. A biological resources assessment of the project was prepared for the applicant by West Coast Environmental and Engineering on June 15, 2005. Condor Environmental has been asked to review the biological resources assessment, visit the site if necessary, and to prepare the biological resources section of the Initial Study pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**Photo 1**: Northerly portion of project site, October 2005. *Photograph by Elihu Gevirtz.*

## Location

The project site is located 3.5 miles north of the City of Simi Valley, approximately one mile north of Tapo Canyon Road at the northern end of Bennett Road. It is a surface aggregate mine that operates within a 1,117 acre site under Conditional Use Permit No. 1367-4. The site is at an approximate elevation of 1,800 feet; latitude 34.33957 and longitude -118.70387.

## Methods

The Biological Assessment by West Coast Environmental and Engineering was reviewed. The California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Game 2005) was queried and a list of locally rare plants of Ventura County was consulted (Magney 2004).

The project site was briefly surveyed on foot by Condor Biologists Elihu Gevirtz and Vince Semonsen on August 23, 2005 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m., and on October 6, 2005 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Site conditions as well as plants and animals observed were noted. The level fields and the northerly hilly areas were surveyed in a crisscross pattern looking for herpetofauna and burrow systems. 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. Plants were identified in the field and unknown species were clipped and brought back to the office for identification. The timing of the survey (late summer/early fall) precluded the ability to identify all plants on the site.

## Results

The surveys were both conducted in mid-day under sunny skies with high temperatures 90 degrees or greater) and slight breezes. Nearly all of Area 2 and at least half of Area 1 have been previously disturbed. According to the owners of the mine, the southerly portion of the 40 acre expansion area had been previously mined. This appears to be true, as most of the acreage had been leveled into three tiered fields with short, steep slopes between them. These slopes support native coastal sage scrub and looked to be somewhat undisturbed. The vegetation in the previously mined areas, consists mostly of black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and other non-native annuals that are indicative of this history. One hill at the lower end of Area 1 has several small, shallow drainages that are short in extent and are dominated by mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). Associated native species that comprise the coastal sage scrub include coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), California sage (*Artemisia californica*), black sage (*Salvia melifera*), and elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). A windrow of Eucalyptus occurs along the site's western boundary.

The northern portion of Area 1 appears to have had less disturbance in the past (compared to the area to the south), and may not have been farmed. The vegetation in this section consists of non-native annual grassland. Very few animals were observed during the site visits. This may be due to the combination of several factors, including: the disturbed nature of the site, the dry vegetation, the lateness of the season, the hot dry days, and the time of day on which the surveys were conducted. Overall, the site appears to have very low to low habitat value.

## Roosting and Nesting

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

## Endangered Species

No rare, threatened or endangered species, or candidates for such listing, were observed on the project site.

## Wetlands

There are several small, shallow drainages that are short in extent and are dominated by mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). This common species frequently occurs in drainages, as well as streambeds and riverbeds. It is a facultative wetland plant (Reed 1988), meaning that it can occur within wetlands and outside of them. On the project site it occurs on a hill and at the base of the hill located near the southern end of Area 1. As can be observed in the current aerial photograph (West Coast Environmental 2005) this vegetated hill is surrounded to the north, south, and east by previously disturbed land. A wetland delineation on the site was not conducted by Condor. There was no standing water anywhere on the site at the time of the surveys, and drainages occupied by mule fat did not appear to have saturated soil, based on a very cursory examination. Soils tests were not conducted. Superficially, this area does not appear to have high ecosystem values; but if necessary, it could easily be avoided without interfering with the proposed mine expansion.

## Coastal Habitats

The project site is outside of the Coastal Zone.

## Habitats Providing Seasonal Concentrations or Migration of Fish and Wildlife

Such habitats and areas do not exist at the project site.

## Locally Important Species and Communities

No species listed by the California Natural Diversity Database, or the California Native Plant Society were observed onsite.

### Adequacy of Prior Study

The Biological Resources Assessment by West Coast Environmental (2005) appears to be sound and to provide an accurate assessment of the conditions on the site, descriptions of sensitive taxa, and their potential for occurring on the site.

## Mitigation Measures

A qualified biologist should be retained to survey the site for special status plant and animal species prior to all future phases of mining activities. If any special status animals are found that could be impacted by mining, the biologist should relocate the animal(s) to a safe location. Silt fencing or other type of exclusionary fencing should be installed to prevent special status animals from entering into the area to be mined. If any sensitive plants are found, the biologist should work with the County staff biologist and California Department of Fish and Game and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff to identify appropriate mitigation. Depending on the sensitivity of the species, appropriate mitigation might include transplanting, seed collection and cultivation for use in revegetation elsewhere on the site, or complete avoidance by excluding the area from future mining activities.

**Table 1**

**Partial List of Plant Species Observed Onsite**

| Scientific Name | Common Name |
|---|---|
| *Baccharis pilularis* | Coyote brush |
| *Baccharis salicifolia* | Mule fat |
| *Artemisia californica* | Sagebrush |
| *Haplopappus squarrosus* | Sawtooth goldenbush |
| *Salvia mellifera* | Black sage |
| *Sambucus mexicana* | Mexican elderberry |

**Table 3**
**Wildlife Species Observed Onsite**

| Scientific Name | Common Name |
|---|---|
| ***Reptiles*** | |
| *Sceloporus occidentalis* | Western fence lizard |
| *Uta stansburiana* | Side-blotched lizard |
| ***Birds*** | |
| *Thryomanes bewickii* | Bewick's wren |
| *Falco sparverius* | American kestrel |
| *Buteo jamaicensis* | Red-tailed hawk |
| *Corvus brachyrhynchos* | American crow |
| *Sturnella neglecta* | Western meadowlark |
| ***Mammals*** | |
| *Thomomys bottae* | Botta's pocket gopher (burrows) |
| *Spermophilus beecheyi* | California ground squirrel |
| *Sylvilagus bachmani* | Brush rabbit |
| *Canis latrans* | Coyote (scat) |

## References

California Department of Fish and Game, 2005. California Natural Diversity Database, Rare Find 3.

Magney, D. 2004. Locally Rare and Uncommon Plants of Ventura County.

Reed, P.B. 1988. National List of Plant Species That Occur in Wetlands: California (Region 0). Biological Report 88 (26.10). USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C.

West Coast Environmental and Engineering 2005. Biological Resources Assessment; P.W. Gillibrand Co., Inc. CUP Boundary Adjustment. Simi Valley, California. June 15.

INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

Gillibrand Mine Boundary Adjustment
PROJECT NO. XXXXX , ZONE NO. X

| | ISSUE (Responsible Department) | PROJECT IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | | CUMULATIVE IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | LS | PS -M | PS | N | LS | PS -M | PS |
| **GENERAL:** | **1. General Plan Environmental Goals and Policies (Plng.)** | | | | | | | | |
| **LAND USE:** | **2. Land Use (Plng.):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Community Character | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Housing | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Growth Inducement | | | | | | | | |
| **RESOURCES:** | **3. Air Quality (APCD):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Regional | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Local | | | | | | | | |
| | **4. Water Resources (PWA):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Groundwater Quantity | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Groundwater Quality | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Surface Water Quantity | | | | | | | | |
| | D. Surface Water Quality | | | | | | | | |
| | **5. Mineral Resources (Plng.):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Aggregate | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Petroleum | | | | | | | | |
| | **6. Biological Resources:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Endangered, Threatened, or Rare Species | | | x | | | | | |
| | B. Wetland Habitat | x | | | | | | | |
| | C. Coastal Habitat | x | | | | | | | |
| | D. Migration Corridors | x | | | | | | | |
| | E. Locally Important Species/Communities | | | x | | | | | |
| | **7. Agricultural Resources (Ag. Dept.):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Soils | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Water | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Air Quality/Micro-Climate | | | | | | | | |
| | D. Pests/Diseases | | | | | | | | |
| | E. Land Use Incompatibility | | | | | | | | |

| | ISSUE (Responsible Department) | PROJECT IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | | CUMULATIVE IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | LS | PS -M | PS | N | LS | PS -M | PS |
| | **8. Visual Resources:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Scenic Highway (Plng.) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Scenic Area/Feature | | | | | | | | |
| | **9. Paleontological Resources** | | | | | | | | |
| | **10. Cultural Resources:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Archaeological | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Historical (Plng.) | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Ethnic, Social or Religious | | | | | | | | |
| | **11. Energy Resources** | | | | | | | | |
| | **12. Coastal Beaches & Sand Dunes** | | | | | | | | |
| **HAZARDS:** | **13. Seismic Hazards (PWA):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Fault Rupture | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Ground Shaking | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Tsunami | | | | | | | | |
| | D. Seiche | | | | | | | | |
| | E. Liquefaction | | | | | | | | |
| | **14. Geologic Hazards (PWA):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Subsidence: | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Expansive Soils | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Landslides/Mudslides | | | | | | | | |
| | **15. Hydraulic Hazards (PWA/FCD):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Erosion/Siltation | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Flooding | | | | | | | | |
| | **16. Aviation Hazards (Airports)** | | | | | | | | |
| | **17. Fire Hazards (Fire)** | | | | | | | | |
| | **18. Hazardous Materials/Waste:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Above-Ground Hazardous Materials (Fire) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Hazardous Materials (EH) | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Hazardous Waste (EH) | | | | | | | | |
| | **19. Noise and Vibration** | | | | | | | | |
| | **20. Glare** | | | | | | | | |
| | **21. Public Health** (EH) | | | | | | | | |

| | ISSUE (Responsible Department) | PROJECT IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | | CUMULATIVE IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | LS | PS -M | PS | N | LS | PS -M | PS |
| **PUBLIC FACILITIES/ SERVICES:** | **22. Transportation/Circulation:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Public Roads and Highways: | | | | | | | | |
| | (1) Level of Service (PWA) | | | | | | | | |
| | (2) Safety/Design (PWA) | | | | | | | | |
| | (3) Tactical Access (Fire) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Private Roads and Driveways (Fire): | | | | | | | | |
| | (1) Safety/Design | | | | | | | | |
| | (2) Tactical Access | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Pedestrian/Bicycle: | | | | | | | | |
| | (1) Public Facilities (PWA) | | | | | | | | |
| | (2) Private Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | D. Parking (Plng.) | | | | | | | | |
| | E. Bus Transit | | | | | | | | |
| | F. Railroads | | | | | | | | |
| | G. Airports (Airports) | | | | | | | | |
| | H. Harbors (Harbors) | | | | | | | | |
| | I. Pipelines | | | | | | | | |
| | **23. Water Supply:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Quality (EH) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Quantity (PWA) | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Fire Flow (Fire) | | | | | | | | |
| | **24. Waste Treatment/Disposal:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Individual Sewage Disposal System (EH) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Sewage Collection/Treatment Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Solid Waste Management (PWA) | | | | | | | | |
| | D. Solid Waste Facilities (EHD) | | | | | | | | |
| | **25. Utilities:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Electric | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Gas | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Communication | | | | | | | | |
| | **26. Flood Control/Drainage:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. FCD Facility (FCD) | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Other Facilities (PWA) | | | | | | | | |

| | ISSUE (Responsible Department) | PROJECT IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | | CUMULATIVE IMPACT DEGREE OF EFFECT* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | LS | PS -M | PS | N | LS | PS -M | PS |
| **PUBLIC FACILITIES/ SERVICES (CONT.):** | **27. Law Enforcement/Emergency Svs. (Sheriff):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Personnel/Equipment | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | **28. Fire Protection (Fire):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Distance/Response Time | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Personnel/Equipment/Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | **29. Education:** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Schools | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Libraries (Lib. Agency) | | | | | | | | |
| | **30. Recreation (GSA):** | | | | | | | | |
| | A. Local Parks/Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | B. Regional Parks/Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| | C. Regional Trails/Corridors | X | | | | | | | |

DEGREE OF EFFECT:
N = No Impact.
LS = Less Than Significant
PS-M = Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation Incorporated.
PS = Potentially Significant Impact.

AGENCIES:

APCD - Air Pollution Control District
GSA - General Services Agency
Harbors - Harbor Department
Lib. Agency - Library Services Agency
Airports - Department Of Airports
Fire – Fire Protection District
PWA - Public Works Agency
Plng. - Planning Division
FCD - Flood Control District
Sheriff - Sheriff's Department
EH - Environmental Health Division
Ag. Dept. - Agricultural Department

## DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES TO CHECKLIST

Please refer to explanation discussion in text of Environmental Document.

| MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE | | YES/MAYBE | NO |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:** | | | |
| 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 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 that 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 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 the total of those impacts on the environment is significant). | | |
| 4. | Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? | | |

| DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT | |
|---|---|
| **On the basis of this initial evaluation:** | |
| [ ] | 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 in section C of the Initial Study 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.* |
| [ ] | I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, 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. |
| [ ] | 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. |

_____ Date _____

Ronald C. Coons
Director
County of Ventura Public Works Agency