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

PROJECT REFERENCE NO.: PM-4932 **PROJECT PLANNER:** Ron Allen

DATE: 17 November 1998
(site visit on 12 November 1998)

PROJECT BIOLOGIST: Carl Thelander and David L. Magney

PROJECT LOCATION: Lockwood Valley, Sec 7, T8N, R20W

PROJECT ADDRESS: none (west of Lockwood Valley Road, approximately 3 miles from Ventura/Kern County line), adjacent to the Ponderosa Ranch.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: subdivision of approximately 83 acres into four parcels of approximately 20 acres each.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING: The project site occurs in northeastern Lockwood Valley, northwest of Frazier Mountain, approximately three miles southwest of Frazier Mountain Park Road. The property is bordered on several sides by USDA Los Padres National Forest lands.

There is one intermittent creek entering the property from the northwest, which enters a culvert near the eastern edge of the property. No sources of running water on the property were observed. Domestic water will be provided by wells. Natural drainage areas are present. Some sections have been modified with culverts (under roads). Wells are present onsite. One mobile home, several storage facilities, and a vehicle are present on site.

The vegetation types present on site consist of two general types: Venturan Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub. The Venturan Pinyon-Juniper Woodland is the predominant vegetation type onsite and in the Lockwood Valley area. It is dominated by Singleleaf Pinyon Pine (*Pinus monophylla*) with Scrub Oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), California Juniper (*Juniperus californica*), Parry Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos parryana*), a Chaparral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata*), California Flannelbush (*Fremontodendron californicum*), Munz Yellow Buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum* ssp. *munzii*), Kennedy Buckwheat (*E. kennedyi* ssp. *kennedyi*), Jeffery Pine (*Pinus jefferyi*), an onion (*Allium* sp.), and numerous species of grasses and forbs. The Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub is dominated by Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Rubber Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), and Green Mormon Tea (*Ephedra viridis*), with several species of annual buckwheats (*Eriogonum* spp.), Burweed (*Ambrosia acanthicarpa*), Lemmon Lessingia (*Lessingia lemmonii*), Cheat Grass (*Bromus tectorum*), mustards (*Sisymbrium* spp.), Bottlebrush Squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides* ssp. *elymoides*), and lupines (*Lupinus* spp.). The intermittent creek is sparsely vegetated by Scalebroom Scrub species, including Scalebroom (*Lepidospartum squamatum*), Tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*), and several annual and perennial herbs. Numerous species of lichens were observed onsite, primarily in the Venturan Pinyon-Juniper Woodland, including Wolf Lichen (*Letharia vulpina*). At least two species of moss were also observed.

Due to the seasonal timing of the field survey, wildlife observations on site were minimal. The field visit revealed the presence of scrub jays, common ravens, red-tailed hawk (1), bobcat (tracks), coyote (tracks) mule deer (tracks) and two observations of chipmunks. California quail was heard calling. There was evidence of lagomorphs in the sage/grassland areas. A visit with a neighboring property owner (Russ Wight) revealed that seven mule deer and one black bear (375 lbs.) were shot in the immediate area during the 1998-hunting season.

A review of the California Natural Diversity Data Base records for the area indicate habitat is present onsite, or in the Lockwood Valley region, for several special-status species, including: Big Bear Valley Woollypod (*Astragalus leucolobus*), Pale-Yellow Layia (*Layia heterotricha*), Flax-like Monardella (*Monardella linoides* ssp. *oblonga*), Abram Oxytheca (*Oxytheca parishii* var. *abramsii*), Salt Spring Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*), Vernal Pool Fairyshrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), Southern Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae umbratica*), Yellow-bellied Salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzia*), and Tehachapi Pocket Mouse (*Perognathus alticola inexpectatus*).

Other special-status plant species known to occur in the region include Heart-leaved Thorn-mint (*Acanthomintha obovata* ssp. *cordata*), Mt. Pinos Onion (*Allium howellii* var. *clokeyi*), Unexpected Larkspur (*Delphinium inopinum*), Mt. Pinos Larkspur (*D. parryi* ssp. *purpureum*), Southern Alpine Buckwheat (*Eriogonum kennedyi* ssp. *alpigenum*), Jepson Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum jepsonii*), Spring Lessingia (*Lessingia tenuis*), Silky Lupine (*Lupinus elatus*), Adobe Yampah (*Perideridia pringlei*), Transverse Range Phacelia (*Phacelia exilis*), and Pine Green-gentian (*Swertia neglecta*). Habitat is present onsite for most of these special-status vascular plants; however, most are not visible or identifiable during November. Seasonal surveys are required, in the Lockwood Valley region, during late spring and mid- to late summer. The site could also provide habitat for special-status lichen species, which may be conducted year round. The California Lichen Society is currently developing a list of special-status lichen species that should be considered during the CEQA review process.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

	Yes	Maybe	No	Discussion of Impact, Significance, and Mitigation Measures
IV. PLANT LIFE. *Will the proposal result in:*				
a) Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X		Development of the property may reduce species diversity or the number of one or more species of native vascular and nonvascular (e.g. bryophytes and lichens) plants onsite and in the Lockwood Valley region.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of plants?		X		Development of the property may directly or indirectly reduce the numbers of one or more species of unique, rare, or endangered species of plants (special-status species). Suitable habitat is present onsite for numerous special-status plant species. Seasonal field surveys are required to determine if any special-status plant species are present onsite.
c) Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?		X		Development of the property will likely result in introductions of new species of plants into the area. Species of concern are invasive exotic taxa that may invade natural communities and compete with native plants, which in turn may adversely affect native wildlife.
d) Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?		X		While the property does not contain any cultivated crops, pinyon nuts are regularly harvested by commercial and private parties, including Chumash descendents, throughout the Lockwood Valley region. The Singleleaf Pinyon Pine (Pinus monophylla) is the only commonly used source for Pine Nuts in California. Loss of large numbers of Singleleaf Pinyon Pine trees would reduce the number of trees slightly.
V. ANIMAL LIFE. *Will the proposal result in:*				
a) Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds; land animals, including reptiles; fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, or insects)?		X		The project may reduce the value of the property as foraging habitat for mammalian predators and raptors, which are using the area in its current state.
b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of			X	Per NDDB records search.

animals?			
c) Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X	Mule deer frequent the area; it is not known if the area is within a major migration corridor. It is likely that most deer occur on NF lands adjacent to this private parcel. Domestic pets introduced to the area will likely encounter predators. Additionally, they will likely reduce the quality of the wildlife habitat in the immediate area of the building sites. Therefore, minimizing the extent of the building envelope is recommended.
d) Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?	X		The area's value as foraging habitat for mule deer, mammalian predators, and raptors will deteriorate.

Additional comments or explanations:

While development of up to four (4) dwelling sites on the approximately 83-acre site would not likely significantly impact or reduce Venturan Pinyon-Juniper Woodland and Great Basin Sagebrush Scrub in the region, associated land use/management activities could significantly alter the natural character and biodiversity of the property. These activities may include harvesting trees for firewood, intensive grazing of one or more of the 20+ acre lots, clearing brush for fire safety, and other vegetation-altering activities. Landscaping practices may also introduce invasive exotic plant and animal species that invade and compete with native species in onsite and surrounding habitats.

Highly important and significant wetland habitats are located approximately one (1) mile northeast of the project site, which is sustained by groundwater. The pumping of groundwater to supply the four dwellings and landscaping may reduce available groundwater supporting the regionally important wetland meadows on northeastern Lockwood Valley. However, no data are available at this time to determine whether onsite groundwater is hydrologically connected to the aforementioned wetlands.

The intermittent creek traversing the property is considered jurisdictional waters of the United States and may contain wetlands; however, no wetlands were observed at the time of the reconnaissance survey. This creek contains a sensitive vegetation type, Scalebroom Scrub, for at least a portion of its length across the property.

Seasonal field surveys for special-status plants and wildlife need to be conducted to determine if any special-status species are present onsite. Botanical surveys should be conducted during late spring (May-June) and mid to late summer (late-July to mid-September) for vascular plants. Lichen surveys may be conducted at anytime, except when snow covers the ground. Botanical surveys should be floristic in nature, and be conducted by qualified botanists familiar with the Lockwood Valley flora.

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT

	Yes	Maybe	No
a. 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		
b. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?			X
c. Does the project have environmental effects which are individually limited but are cumulatively considerable?		X	
d. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?			X
Alternatives to the Proposed Action. Does the project require the discussion and evaluation of a range of reasonable alternatives which could feasibly attain the basic objectives of the project?	X		

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYST:

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

___ I find the proposed project will NOT have a significant adverse environmental effect, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

_X_ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant adverse environmental effect, there would not be a significant effect in this case if the mitigation measures described herein are included in the project, A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

___ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant adverse environmental effect, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT should be prepared.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Recommended Mitigation Considerations:

1. Development should be relocated to areas not containing sensitive habitat or populations of any special-status species (after seasonal floristic and special-status species surveys have been conducted onsite).
2. Building envelopes should be designed to avoid all sensitive biological resources.
3. Activities beyond the designated building envelopes that would alter the natural vegetation should be restricted or prohibited per deed restriction or other suitable legal method.
4. All development should avoid direct or indirect impacts to the existing drainages, especially those containing Scalebroom Scrub or other wetland and riparian vegetation/habitats.
5. Groundwater withdrawals should be regulated if the onsite groundwater aquifer is found to be connected to or support downstream/downslope wetlands.