

## COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: August 28, 2003

Requestor: Debbie Morrisset

Project: CCC-0305

Field Study: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Justification: Time of year not suitable to determine presence of sensitive plant species for which project may cause a significant CEQA impact.

### A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
a. endangered, threatened, or rare species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. wetland habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. coastal habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. migration corridors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. locally important species/communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Degree of Effect Explanation*

**N = None**

**LS = Less than significant effect**

**PS-M = Significant effect; Mitigation incorporated for a ND**

**PS = Potentially Significant effect; EIR required**

### B. DISCUSSION

The project site consists of the legalization of an 11.93-acre parcel located at 9801 Yerba Buena Road approximately 800 feet north of the Hasler Road intersection. The applicant requests a Conditional Certificate of Compliance to legalize an illegally subdivided parcel.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (January 2003) listed several special-status species that could be present within the communities onsite. These are discussed below as applicable to the project location.

USGS topographic maps were reviewed utilizing computer topographic maps (National Geographic, 2001) and available aerial photography was also reviewed (Ventura County RMA, Mapping Services - GIS). The onsite elevation ranges from approximately 800 to 1,300 feet above mean sea level. The site slopes steeply from Yerba Buena Road uphill to the east with the northeast portion of the property sloping downward to the south toward Hasler Road. The site contains an access road from the east (access from Hasler Road) that ends in a developed area within the center of the parcel that appears to contain a residence (trailer) and surrounding landscaped areas. The rest of the site appears to be undeveloped, containing native chaparral habitat and open areas. Additionally, the northeast corner of the property appears to contain an abandoned portion of road. Upon review of the geologic map of the area (Dibblee Jr., Ehrenspeck, 1990) it appears the site is underlain by the lower Topanga formation with a band of

Conejo volcanic formation located in a strip from the northwest corner to the southeast portion of the parcel.

As observed in aerial photography and from experience on projects in the area, the native habitats on site likely consist primarily of mixed chaparral and coastal sage scrub. These habitat types generally include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), black sage (*Salvia melifera*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* and *E. cinereum*), and laurel sumac (*Rhus laurina*). Associated species often include toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), white and purple sage (*Salvia apiana* and *S. leucophylla*), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*), and gooseberry (*Ribes* sp.). Grassland habitats in the area are often characterized by non-native oat (*Avena* sp.) and brome (*Bromus* sp.) grasses. These habitats cover a majority of the parcel with the exception of the access road, residence area, and surrounding landscaping. Additionally, based on the aerial photography, some native coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) may be located on the property.

No blueline streams are shown on the USGS quadrangle. A blueline stream does occur on the north side of Hasler Road, approximately 600 to 800 feet south of the parcel. In addition, the Little Sycamore Canyon riparian area lies on the west side of Yerba Buena Road, which is adjacent to the western property boundary, but outside the site.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (May 2003) listed several special-status species that could be present within native chaparral and coastal sage areas of the property. Given the native habitats on site, the elevation range, and the underlying geology, the following special-status species have the potential to occur on the site.

- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), a wide ranging species found in mountains, foothills, and adjacent grasslands. A State species of concern.
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), a wide ranging species found in open grasslands, sagebrush flats, and foothill areas. A State species of concern.
- Coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), found in deserts, semi-arid areas, and in woodland and riparian habitats. A Federal species of concern.
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*), found in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. A State species of concern.
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), occurs in coastal scrub and rocky outcrops. A State species of concern.
- Plummer's Mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), found in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub. A CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to July.
- Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), a deciduous shrub species that occurs primarily on sandstone substrates with a single known occurrence in the Santa Monica Mountains in chaparral habitat on Conejo volcanics. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from July to November.
- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp *blochmaniae*), a perennial herb that occurs in bluff scrub, chaparral, coastal scrub from 15 to 1,476 feet elevation. This plant is a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to June and is found in more open areas.
- Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp *agourensis*), a perennial herb found in chaparral cismontane woodland/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to June.

- Marescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens*), a perennial herb found in chaparral/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened, a State rare, and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to June.
- Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia*), a perennial herb found in chaparral or coastal scrub/volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from March to June.  
Conejo dudleya (*Dudleya parva*), a perennial herb found in coastal scrub and valley and foothill grassland/ rocky or gravelly habitats, primarily on Conejo volcanic soils. A Federal threatened and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to June.
- Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), a perennial herb that is found in chaparral, coastal scrub, and valley/ foothill grasslands, primarily on Conejo volcanic soils. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to July.  
Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*), an annual herb that is found in chaparral, valley grassland and foothill grassland habitats. A Federal and State endangered and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from March to August.
- Rayless ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*), an annual herb found in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub. A CNPS List 2 species that blooms from January to April.

In addition, any mature oak trees that may occur on the project site would be considered a locally important species by Ventura County.

#### Biological resources issues:

- Endangered, threatened, or rare species.** This lot subdivision legalization would have no immediate direct impacts to endangered, threatened, or rare species located on this site. Site development, including fire clearance zones, have already disturbed the site in the vicinity of the residence. However, expansion of the residential use by future development could affect listed species if present within native habitats located on the parcel site. Species of particular concern are Lyon's pentachaeta, Conejo buckwheat, and all of the dudleyas (except Blochman's dudleya). Many of the dudleyas are associated with Conejo volcanic areas which are located on the site. The loss of these species or their habitat would be considered significant. Therefore, mitigation is suggested for the protection of sensitive plant species and associated habitat, at that time that further development plans are proposed.

Although there is the potential for the coast horned lizard, western whiptail golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, and rufous-crowned sparrow to occur onsite, none of these species are listed as endangered, threatened, or rare. The loss of less than 12 acres of habitat would not significantly impact these species. No mitigation would be required.

- Wetland Habitat.** No specific wetland habitat appears to be present onsite, although this assumption is based on aerial photos and the USGS topographic map and is not definitive. If any wetland were to be present on the site, future development actions would require appropriate setbacks (100 feet) per Ventura County ordinance and/or mitigation per regulatory requirements.
- Coastal Habitat.** Environmentally sensitive habitats listed within the Ventura County Coastal Area Plan (January, 2002) include a designation for creek corridors found

within the coastal zone on the South Coast. Although no designated creek corridors occur on the parcel site, Little Sycamore Canyon has been designated as an environmentally sensitive habitat by Ventura County. This resource lies across Yerba Buena Road approximately 20 feet from the western property boundary. The western portion of the parcel adjacent to Yerba Buena Road is steep and rocky and likely precludes development in this area. Therefore, effects to coastal habitat would be limited to storm water runoff from the site. If future development grading of the site exceeds one acre, the project will be required to meet the Ventura County Stormwater Quality Urban Impact Mitigation Plan (SQUIMP), which would be sufficient to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. If grading is less than one acre, potential impacts to coastal habitats would be less than significant.

- d. **Migration Corridors.** The parcel is 11.93-acres in size and is surrounded by native habitat areas, with Yerba Buena and Hasler Roads providing only partial barriers to the movement of some species. Species passing through the project site may be partially blocked by future development, but will alternately be able to utilize other areas of the site and adjacent undeveloped land for passage, given the single residence (plus guesthouse) permitted on the lot. Therefore, any future development would not be a significant barrier to migration. No mitigation is required.
- e. **Locally Important Species/Communities.** Native oak trees may exist on the site and the loss of which would result in a **Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation** is implemented to reduce the impacts. The subject parcel is within the Santa Monica Mountains Overlay Zone. Oaks and other native trees (as listed in the non-coastal ordinance) are protected by Ventura County in the non-coastal zone, inferring that the County considers them to be a locally important species, and as such, should afford them the same protection in the coastal zone as part of "environmentally sensitive habitat". This is consistent with the Coastal Act (PRC 30107.5) because oaks perform a special role in ecosystems and can be easily disturbed or degraded by development. The lot legalization would not directly impact these resources, but future development of the site could have potentially significant impacts.

### C. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	<u>Yes/Maybe</u>	<u>No</u>
1. 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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the project have impacts, which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



#### D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☒

Required for Negative Declaration ☒

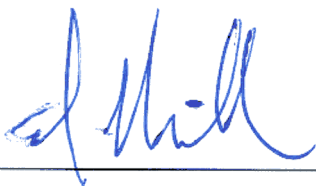
Although this lot subdivision legalization would not result in direct significant impacts to biological resources, future grading and development may impact biological resources potentially present onsite. Therefore, the following measures are suggested prior to any development or future grading.

- a. **Sensitive Flora.** Prior to any future development or grading activities, surveys for sensitive plant species shall be performed during the blooming period, when species potentially onsite are observable and can be identified to species. If endangered, threatened, or rare species occur onsite, they shall be avoided and fenced to prevent disturbance. A conservation easement shall be placed on such portion of the property that contains those species.
- e. **Native Trees.** Per the ESH Policy D.6 (Ventura County Coastal Area Plan, 2002), a future building envelope shall be identified on the final map that avoids oak trees as much as possible. The areas of native oak trees on site shall be mapped and preferably protected from disturbance by a deed restriction to eliminate development within those areas. This restriction shall be recorded with the county recorder, prior to recordation of the Conditional Certificate of Compliance -Parcel Map. If a suitable building envelope cannot be developed without removing or disturbing oak resources, the following mitigation shall apply: mitigation for the replacement of County listed protected trees would include a minimum of a 3 to 1 replacement, with the minimum replacement size of a 15-gallon container. This recorded deed restriction and associated mitigation will reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

#### E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☒ EIR Required ☐

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_



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Date: 8-28-03

August 28, 2003



## F. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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