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**Preliminary Biological Assessment
CEMEX Aggregate Mine
Adjustment of Mining Operations Area
Moorpark, California
CUP No. 4633-1**

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

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Introduction

The Resource Management Agency Planning Division of the County of Ventura is processing an application by CEMEX Construction Materials, L.P. to adjust the existing mining boundary to include 5.64 acres. 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. Aerial view of existing mine and surrounding area. Date unknown. *Photo courtesy of Ventura County.*

Location

The project site is located 4 miles north of the City of Moorpark. It is a surface aggregate mine that operates within a 1,117 acre site under Conditional Use Permit No. CUP-4633. It is situated between elevations 1,500 and 1,900 feet, approximately at N34.2059572 W-118.5279412.

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 visited briefly by Condor Biologists Elihu Gevirtz and Vince Semonsen, accompanied by Jared Varonin of West Coast Environmental on October 6, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Site conditions as well as plants and animals observed were noted. Most of the proposed expansion areas were surveyed in a random pattern looking for herpetofauna, burrow systems, and birds. Areas D, E, and F were not surveyed because they were not accessible due to washed out roads. 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 survey was conducted in mid-day under sunny skies with high temperatures 75 - 90 degrees) and high winds with gusts estimated to be greater than 40 mph. The vegetation consists of coastal sage scrub and non-native grassland. Several areas are quite disturbed. A partial list of plants observed is provided in Table 1. Animals observed are listed in Table 2. 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 and windy day, and the time of day on which the surveys were conducted. Overall, the site appears to have very low to low habitat value.



Photo 2: One of the expansion areas with active mine in background. October 2005. *Photograph by Elihu Gevirtz.*

Roosting and Nesting

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

Endangered Species

A juvenile coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*) was observed on the site in a sparsely vegetated area located between two active mine roads. A GPS location was not taken at that exact location, but a nearby location provided is N34.2059572 W-118.5279412 (Jared Veronin, West Coast Environmental, *pers comm*). The individual lizard was measured and photographed, including Photo 2 and others. This species is listed as a California Species of Special Concern and a Federal Sensitive Species.



Photo 3. Coast horned lizard captured and released on Cemex Site, October 2005. *Photo by Elihu Gevirtz.*

Wetlands

No wetlands were observed.

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

One coast horned lizard was observed on the site as described above.

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
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	Coyote brush
<i>Baccharis salicifolia</i>	Mule fat
<i>Artemisia californica</i>	Sagebrush
<i>Haplopappus squarrosus</i>	Sawtooth goldenbush
<i>Salvia mellifera</i>	Black sage
<i>Salvia apiana</i>	White sage
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	Mexican elderberry
<i>Yucca whipplei</i>	Our Lord's candle
<i>Schinus molle</i>	Pepper tree
<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>	Buckwheat
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Tree tobacco
<i>Leptodactylon californicum</i>	Prickly phlox
<i>Mimulus longiflorus</i>	Southern bush monkey flower
<i>Ericameria ericoides</i>	Mock heather
<i>Brickellia californica</i>	California brickellbush
<i>Leymus condensatus</i>	Giant rye
<i>Opuntia littoralis</i>	Prickly pear cactus
<i>Salvia columbariae</i>	Chia

Table 3

Wildlife Species Observed Onsite

Scientific Name	Common Name
Reptiles	
<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>	Western fence lizard
<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	Side-blotched lizard
<i>Phrynosoma coronatum</i>	Coast horned lizard
Birds	
<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	Bewick's wren
<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	Rock wren
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Red-tailed hawk
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning dove
<i>Calypte anna</i>	Anna's hummingbird
<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	House finch
<i>Pipilo crissals</i>	California towhee
<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Yellow rumped warbler
Mammals	
<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	Botta's pocket gopher (burrows)
<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	California ground squirrel
<i>Dipodomys sp.</i>	Kangaroo rat? (burrows)
<i>Neotoma lepida intermedia?</i>	Desert? woodrat (nest)
<i>Sylvilagus bachmani</i>	Brush rabbit
<i>Canis latrans</i>	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.

West Coast Environmental and Engineering 2005. Biological Resources Impact Assessment of Proposed Modification to Mining Area: CUP-4633-1. CEMEX Construction Materials, L.P., Moorpark, CA. November 11.