SECTION B

INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

Job: SD05 0051 (PMW LLA)

Requester: Debbie Morrisset

Applicant: Steven Russak

Date: August 24, 2006

Survey Type: Field and Office

Rationale: Lot line adjustment, single family residential

Methodology: ENSR biologists, Manjunath Venkat and Catrina Mangiardi, conducted a reconnaissance-level biological survey of the project site consisting of four lots (current A.P.N. #s 649-0-108-290, 310, 540 and 649-0-090-050). The survey was conducted on August 18, 2006 to determine the extent and nature of the biological resources on the project site. Additional resources utilized to evaluate the project site included a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), for the Santa Susana and Oat Mountain United States Geological Survey's 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle maps.

Site Description: The 4 lots, totaling to approximately 8.26-acres, is located just west of the Ventura/Los Angles County line, in Ventura County, California. The project site can be accessed off Valley Circle Boulevard, and heading north on Thompson Road. A private road named Vaughn Road provides access to the site at the southern end. The site is located in a hilly terrain, south of the Santa Susana Mountains. The elevation of the site ranges from approximately 985 feet to approximately 1,177 feet. Residential development occurs south and southwest of the project site. A north-south trending unnamed drainage occurs along the western boundary of the site, separating the residential development from the project site. Bank to bank width of this drainage adjacent to the project is approximately 160 feet. To the immediate east of the project site is open space consisting of hilly /rocky terrain before another development area occurs less than a mile. To the immediate north is open space/natural area.

The project site has numerous rocky outcrops dotting the entire landscape and the soil on site is Gaviota rocky sandy loam. There is evidence of a recent fire through this area and signs of regeneration of shrub vegetation are evident. The area is fairly disturbed with existing dirt tracks through the site and other evidence of human encroachment can be seen, particularly on the south and western portions, in and along the western bank of the drainage. There is also a horse stable along the upper bank of the drainage, southwest of the project site.

The vegetation community (upland area) on the project site may be generally classified as remnant coastal sage scrub/chaparral, although, non-native, weedy species such as Tocalate (*Centaurea melitensis*), and short-pod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana)* constitutes the dominant understory vegetation. Native plant species on the site include California sage (*Artemesia californica),* white sage *(Salvia apiana)* and California wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), occurring in small patches scattered on the site. Laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), is the dominant shrub vegetation scattered throughout the site (overstory). One Manzanita tree (*Arcostaphylos* sp.) and one small coast live oak *(Quercus agrifolia)* was also identified. Other plant species identified on the site during the survey include: white sage (pepper (*Capsicum* sp.), dove weed (*Croton setigerus*), horseweed (*Conyza Canadensis*), saw-toothed goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), common sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), wild oats (*Avena spp.*), brome grass (*Bromus spp.*), Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*) and tree tobacco (*Nicotina glauca*).

The vegetation within the streambed of the unnamed drainage consists of patches of arroyo willow *(Salix lasiolepis),* laurel sumac, California sage and castor *(Ricinus communis*). The downstream hydrological

connectivity of this drainage is modified due to roads and urban development, however, the rainfall flow is likely conveyed to Chatsworth reservoir.

Wildlife species observed during the survey include: California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), wrentit *(Chamaea fasciata*), red-tailed hawk (flying over) (*Buteo jamaicensis)*, and brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*).

A vegetation map is provided in **Attachment A** along with project site area maps (source: www.googleearth.com) and photographs of the project site are provided in **Attachment B.**

SECTION C

DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

	Project Impacts				Cumulative Impacts			
	Degree of Effect				Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
6. Biological Resources								
a. Endangered, threatened or rare species		✓				✓		
b. Wetland Habitat	✓				✓			
c. Coastal Habitat	✓				✓			
d. Migration Corridors		✓				✓		
e. Locally important species/communities			✓			✓		

N: No impact
LS: Less than significant
PS-M: Potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance
PS: Potentially significant, even after mitigation

a. Endangered, Threatened or Rare Species

Attachment C is a list of special-status species recorded as occurring within the Santa Susana and Oat Mountain USGS Quadrangles. None of the species identified in the CNDDB analysis were observed during the site visit. However, the following special status species which could potentially occur on the site, based on habitat characteristics are briefly discussed further:

Plants:

- **Santa Susana tarplant** (*Deinandra minthornii*): This species recognized as a 'rare' species by the state of California and as List 1B by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Santa Susana tarplant is generally found in Chaparral and coastal scrub habitats and grows in crevices of sandstone boulders and around rocky sandstone outcrops. The project site has numerous rocky outcrops and the project site provides a marginal habitat present for this species. Low potential for occurrence.

- **Slender Mariposa lily (***Calochortus clavatus var. gracilis*): This species is recognized as a CNPS list 1B species, and is generally found in chaparral and coastal scrub habitats. The project site provides a marginal habitat for this species and hence there is a low potential for occurrence of this species on site.

- **Plummer's mariposa lily** (*Calochortus plummerae*): This species is recognized as a CNPS list 1B species, and is generally found in coastal scrub, chaparral and, valley foothill grassland and cismontane woodlands. The species occurs on rocky and sandy sites, usually of granitic or alluvial

material. The project site affords a marginal habitat for this species. Low potential for occurrence.

- **San Fernando Valley spineflower** *(Chorizanthe parryi var. Fernandina):* This species is recognized as candidate species for federal status and a state endangered species and has been historically documented in the Chatsworth area, though known to be extirpated in this area. This species is generally found in coastal scrub habitats in sandy soils. The project site has marginal habitat and the site affords a low potential for occurrence of this species.

- **Slender-horned spineflower** *(Dodecahema leptoceras):* This species is recognized as a federal and state endangered species. It occurs in chaparral and coastal scrub, specifically in alluvial fan sage scrub, in flood-deposited terraces and washes. The unnamed drainage along the western boundary of the site supports a marginal habitat of this species. Low potential for occurrence.

Animals:

The following candidate, rare, threatened or endangered animal species or "sensitive species" could potentially occur on the project site:

- **San Diego desert woodrat** *(Neotoma lepida intermedi):* This species is recognized as a Species of Concern by the CDFG. This species occurs sporadically throughout scrub and chaparral habitats locally, and is found on sites with rocky outcroppings or cactus, and prefers areas with both present. The project site does support habitat in the form of rocky outcrops. However, this species is generally less abundant than the more generalist dusky footed woodrat. Low potential for occurrence.

- **Coast (San Diego horned lizard)** *(Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillii)*. This species is recognized by the CDFG as a Species of Concern and generally inhabits coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats in arid and semi-arid climate conditions. Prefers friable, rocky, or shallow sandy soils. There is suitable habitat for this species on site, however, there is a low potential for this species to occur on site given the site conditions and limited documented occurrences in the area.

Plant Communities:

CDFG and CNPS have identified several native plant communities that are rare and/or diminishing within California. Substantial losses of these plant communities may be considered "significant" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The following sensitive plant community is documented for the project area:

- **Southern willow scrub** is a riparian community generally thriving in seasonally flooded streams, washes and in floodplains of larger streams. Dominant plant species in this community may include arroyo willow (*salix lasiolepis*), red willow (*salix laevigata*) and narrow-leaf willow (*Salix exigua*). Other component species that may occur in this habitat include mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). The unnamed drainage next to the project site, particularly in the southern portion, support small patches of willow scrub. The project development footprint is not expected to encroach into this area.

b. Wetland Habitat

The property does not contain a wetland habitat, and therefore, no impacts to wetland habitats are anticipated.

c. Coastal Habitat

The project site is located approximately more than 14 miles from the coast and would not be considered a coastal habitat.

d. Migration Corridors

The project site is located approximately 7 miles south of the Santa Susana Mountains, which is a significant wildlife movement corridor (habitat linkages) in the area. However, Highway 118 to the south of the mountain range forms a formidable barrier which greatly impedes wildlife movement south into the project area. However, the area south of Hwy. 118, and north of the project site is relatively undeveloped. Therefore, this area may facilitate movement onto the project site, for small mammals and medium-sized wildlife species. Wildlife could still utilize culverts and other passages under Highway 118 to move down into the project site area, particularly through the unnamed drainage on the western boundary. Drainages such as these, though relatively disturbed and increasingly urbanized, still facilitate dispersal and act as movement corridors for wildlife. The open space area northwest of the project site may also facilitate ingress and egress of wildlife to and from the project site. Areas east and south of the project site are urbanized and therefore afford a limited potential for wildlife movement. In general, due to the relatively small size of the project site, in comparison to the size of the wildlife movement corridors in the area, project site development is not expected to impede wildlife movements in the project area, particularly if the unnamed drainage is not impacted. However, the effect incremental loss of such land is a concern. The proposed development should not create a significant impact on migration corridors, and should be considered less than significant.

e. Locally Important Species/Communities

The chaparral/coastal sage scrub elements occurring on the project site are considered to be a locally important community. Since the project is currently at a preliminary stage (lot adjustment) and future development footprint is not known, specifics of project impacts to on-site resources cannot be determined at this time. However, general mitigation measures provided in **Section E** is recommended for future implementation.

SECTION D

MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:	YES/ MAYBE	NO
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, 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 which 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 which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (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 which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		✓

SECTION E

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 below 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.

Mitigation Measures

The chaparral/coastal sage scrub vegetation community on the property, with the laurel sumac and sage brush component species, are considered to be a locally important community. Impacts to this habitat should be minimized to the maximum extent possible, excluding any required fire zone vegetation clearance setback. Appropriate construction-phase Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be employed to isolate development footprint from surrounding natural areas; to prevent erosion and to minimize encroachment into natural areas.

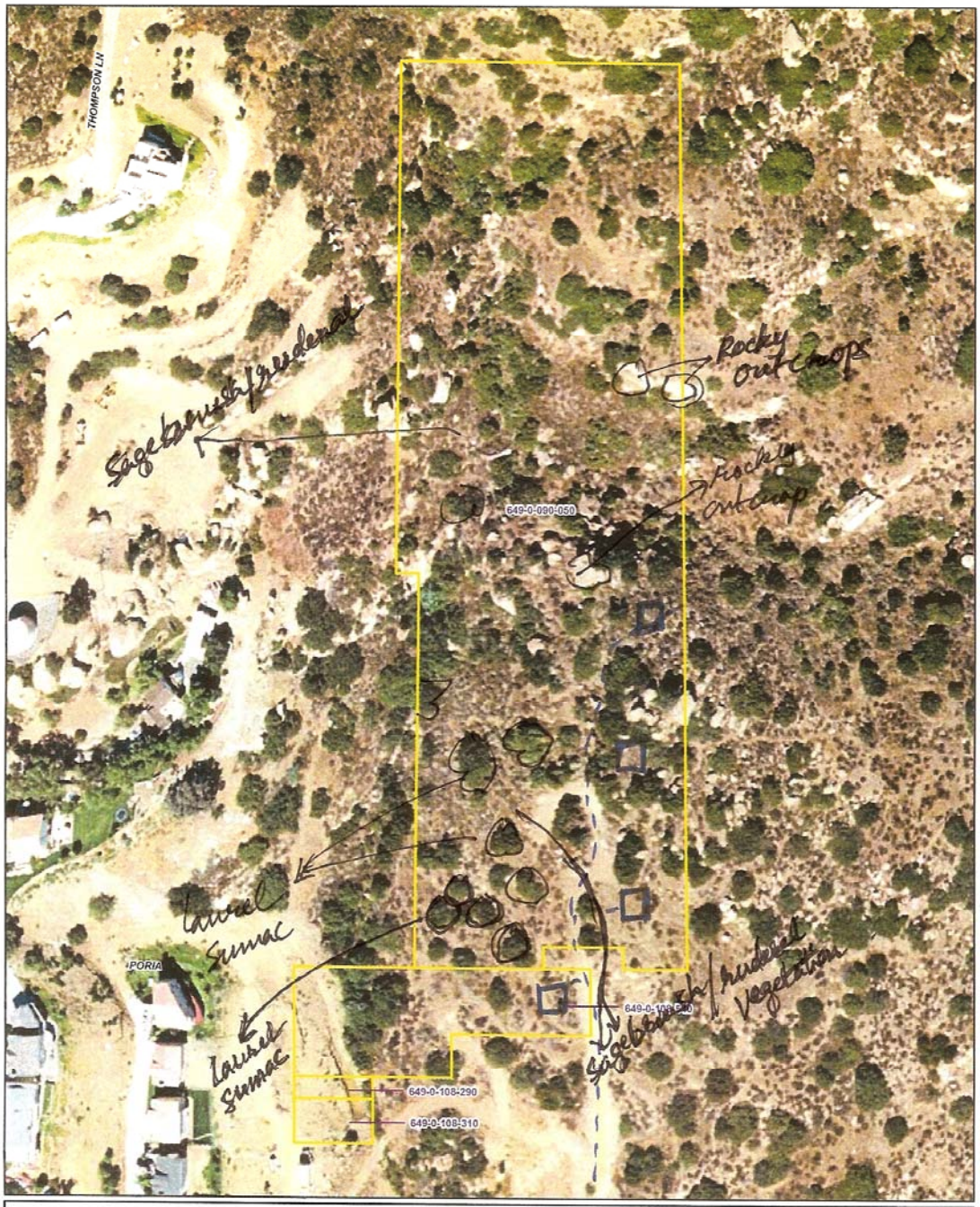
The project site has a low potential for some sensitive plant species to occur (identified in Section C). Since the site survey was not conducted during the optimal time to detect these species, a spring floristic survey for rare plants should be conducted by a qualified botanist, prior to grading and construction.

To avoid impacts to nesting birds, removal of native vegetation should be carried out before the "active" nesting season (generally March through August). If initial land disturbance is carried out during the potential nesting period then a survey for occupied nests within the project area should be carried out by a qualified biologist, no more than two weeks before the construction activities. If occupied nests are identified, construction should occur no closer than 100 feet from the nests until the adults and young are no longer reliant on the nest site, as determined by an approved Ventura County biologist.

The unnamed drainage likely qualifies as a "Waters of the US", and also qualifies as a CDFG jurisdictional area, as the drainage supports bed and bank features. Encroachment into the jurisdictional area of this drainage will likely require appropriate permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and CDFG.

ATTACHMENT A

VEGETATION MAP



VENTURA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY
MAPPING SERVICES - GIS
05/17/2006

SD05-0051
649-0-108-290, 310, 540
& 649-0-090-050
AERIAL PHOTO

0 100 200 Feet

N

ATTACHMENT B

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

And

Project Area Image

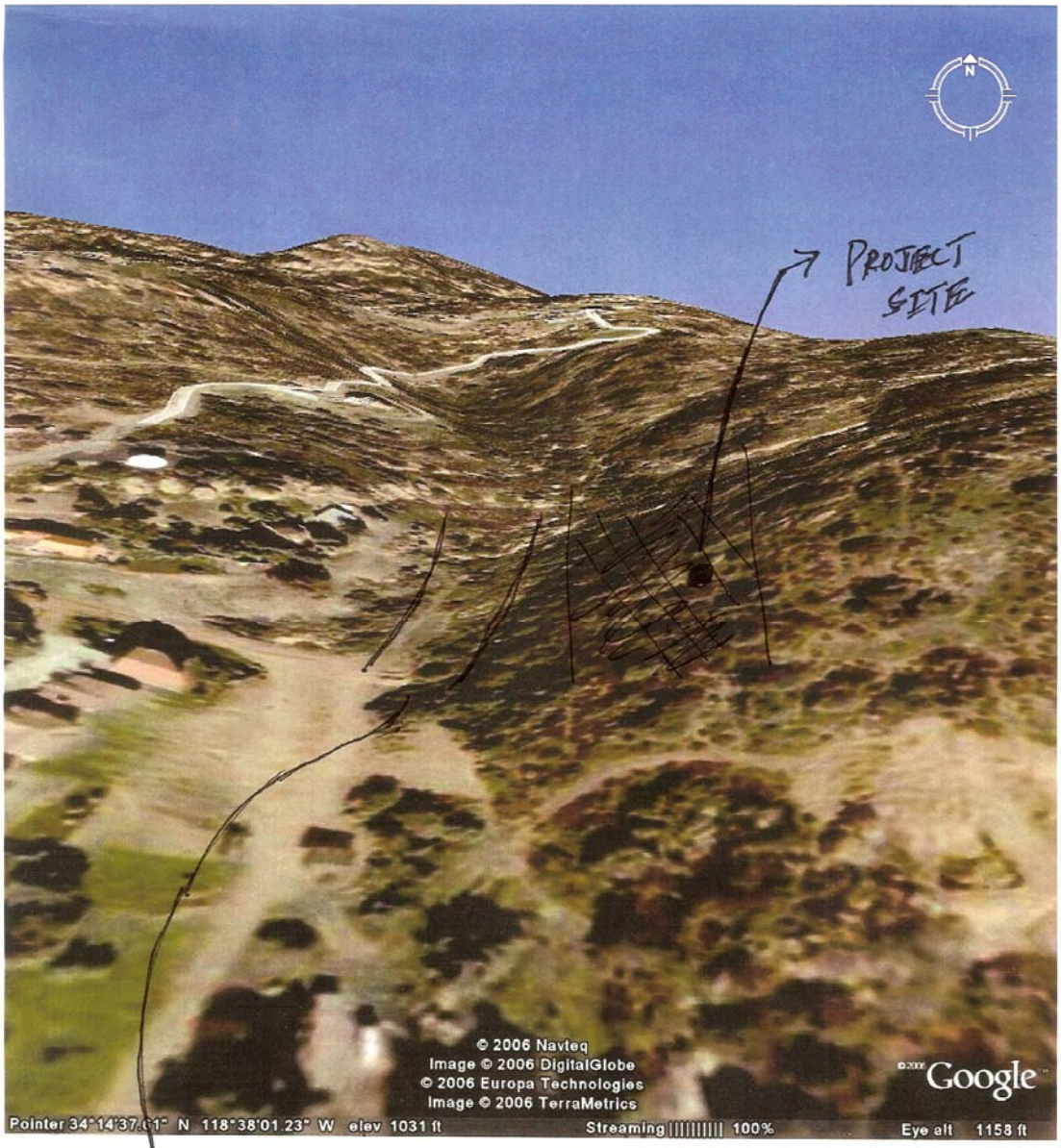
Photo 1. View of dirt road at the southern end of the site, with ruderal Vegetation (mustard and annual grasses) on either side. Proposed development pads are to left on top of the slope. View looking south.

Photo 2. View of rocky outcrops found on the site. Vegetation seen is predominantly mustard and other ruderal species. View looking southwest.

Photo 3. View onsite vegetation. Native laurel sumac shrub at left and in background. Rocky outcrops and an understory of buckwheat, scattered sagebrush and ruderal (mustard/tocalote) vegetation. View lookingeast.

Photo 4. View of vegetation community showing rocky outcrops, laurel sumac shrubs, and an understory of scattered sage scrub and ruderal vegetation. View looking southeast.

Photo 5. View of unnamed drainage along the western portion of the site. Stands of willow can be seen on the right within streambed. View looking west.


PROJECT SITE
© 2006 Navteq
Image © 2006 DigitalGlobe
© 2006 Europa Technologies
Image © 2006 TerraMetrics
Google
Pointer 34°14'37.61" N 118°38'01.23" W elev 1031 ft
Streaming 100%
Eye alt 1158 ft
Unnamed Drainage

ATTACHMENT C

California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)

List of Sensitive Species (Santa Susana/Oat Mountain USGS Quadrangles)

California Department of Fish and Game
Natural Diversity Database
Selected Elements by Scientific Name - Portrait

	Scientific Name/Common Name	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	GRank	SRank	CDFG or CNPS/R-E-D
1	***Aimophila ruficeps canescens*** southern California rufous-crowned sparrow	ABPBX91091			G5T2T4	S2S3	SC
2	***Athene cunicularia*** burrowing owl	ABNSB10010			G4	S2	SC
3	***California Walnut Woodland***	CTT71210CA			G2	S2.1	
4	***Calochortus clavatus var. gracilis*** slender mariposa lily	PMLIL0D096			G4T1	S1.1?	1B/3-2-3
5	***Calochortus plummerae*** Plummer's mariposa lily	PMLIL0D150			G3	S3.2	1B/2-2-3
6	***Chorizanthe parryi var. fernandina*** San Fernando Valley spineflower	PDPGN040J1	Candidate	Endangered	G2T1	S1.1	1B/3-3-3
7	***Clemontane Alkali Marsh***	CTT52310CA			G1	S1.1	
8	***Danaus plexippus*** monarch butterfly	IILEPP2010			G5	S3	
9	***Deinandra minthornii*** Santa Susana tarplant	PDAST4R0J0		Rare	G2	S2.2	1B/2-2-3
10	***Dodecahema leptoceras*** slender-horned spineflower	PDPGN0V010	Endangered	Endangered	G1	S1.1	1B/3-3-3
11	***Neotoma lepida intermedia*** San Diego desert woodrat	AMAFF08041			G5T3?	S3?	SC
12	***Orcuttia californica*** California Orcutt grass	PMPOA4G010	Endangered	Endangered	G2	S2.1	1B/3-3-2
13	***Phrynosoma coronatum (blainvillii*** Coast (San Diego) horned lizard	ARACF12021			G4G5	S3S4	SC
14	***Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest***	CTT61310CA			G4	S4	
15	***Southern Cottonwood Willow Riparian Forest***	CTT61330CA			G3	S3.2	
16	***Southern Mixed Riparian Forest***	CTT61340CA			G2	S2.1	
17	***Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland***	CTT62400CA			G4	S4	
18	***Southern Willow Scrub***	CTT63320CA			G3	S2.1	
19	***Spea (=Scaphiopus) hammondii*** western spadefoot	AAABF01030			G3	S3	SC
20	***Thamnophis hammondii*** two-striped garter snake	ARADB36160			G3	S2	SC
21	***Valley Oak Woodland***	CTT71130CA			G3	S2.1	