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July 3, 2007

Ms. Lorie Baker
County of Ventura
Resource Management Agency, Planning Division
800 South Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009
Submitted via email: Lorie.Baker@ventura.org

Subject: Initial Study for the Lodder Lot Line Adjustment Project (Case No. SD06-0067)

Lorie:

Provided below is Section 6, Biological Resources, of the Initial Study for the Lodder Lot Line Adjustment Project.

If you have any questions or need any more information regarding this report, please call me at (805) 681-3100, or email me at michelle.bates@tetrattech.com.

Sincerely,

TETRA TECH, INC.

Michelle Bates
Senior Biologist

Section A. Project Description

Project Name: Lodder Lot Line Adjustment

Project Number: Case No. SD06-0067

Applicant: Dieter Lodder

Project Location: Center Road, Piru Area, APNs 056-0-020-17, -22, -23, -24. Also see Figure 1.

Nature and Purpose of Project: The proposed project consists of a lot line adjustment between two lots, APN 056-0-020-17 (known as existing Parcel 1) and APNs 056-0-020-20, -23, -24 (known as existing Parcel 2). The parcels would be reconfigured as follows: Proposed Parcel 1: 39.49 acres gross/net; Proposed Parcel 2: 121.96 acres gross/net. The applicant has agreed to incorporate a restrictive covenant that would encompass all open space land in the property, with the exception of a small area near the existing home.

Description of Physical Alterations/Improvements and Project Facilities: The proposed project would adjust the lines between two lots.

Methodology: This biological resources portion of the Initial Study Checklist has been prepared in order to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on biological resources pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Impacts were evaluated according to the criteria provided in the *Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines* (Ventura County 2006a).

Site Description: The project site is located near the town of Piru (see Figure 1). The project site is used as a plant nursery. A single family home is also present within the site and brush has been cleared around the home, likely for fire control. A large portion of the site is open space, often on steep hillslopes. To the north of the site is additional open space habitat, to the east is Piru Creek, to the south is existing residential and commercial development, and to the west is additional open space and agricultural and nursery facilities. Several small, concrete drainage ditches run through the site. Open space hillside areas are dominated by chaparral habitat. Adjacent to the site to the north is a Ventura County Flood Control drainage basin. Photos of the site are provided within Appendix A and a site location map is provided in Figure 1.

Section B. Initial Study Checklist

Section 6 of the Initial Study Checklist for the Lodder project is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Initial Study Checklist

6. Biological Resources:	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			X				X	
b. Wetland Habitat			X				X	
c. Coastal Habitat	X				X			
d. Migration Corridors			X				X	
e. Locally Important Species/Communities			X				X	

Degree of Effect:

N = No Impact.

LS = Less Than Significant.

PS-M = Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation Incorporated.

PS = Potentially Significant Impact.

Section C. Discussion of Responses to Checklist

a. Endangered, Threatened, or Rare Species.

For the purposes of this report, special-status species meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Federal or state listed threatened or endangered species,
- Federal or state proposed threatened or endangered species,
- Federal candidate species,
- State rare species,
- Species of special concern according to the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG),
- Species fully protected by the California Department of Fish and Game's Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB),
- Species monitored by the CNDDB,
- Plant species on the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List.

In order to assess the potential presence of special-status species within the project site, a site visit was conducted by Tetra Tech on April 25, 2007. A search of the CNDDB (Commercial Version, data to expire December 2, 2007) was also completed on April 13, 2007 for the Piru Quadrangle in order to determine which special-status species could occur within the project site.

Special-status wildlife species that could occur within the project site according to the CNDDDB are provided in Table 2. Species for which no habitat is present at the project site (i.e., fish species that would be found in perennial creeks and rivers) have not been included in Table 2. No special-status wildlife species were found during the survey completed April 25, 2007.

Table 2 Special-Status Wildlife Species that Could Occur at the Project Site

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	State Status	Source
Birds				
<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>	California condor	FE	SE	CNDDDB
Fish				
<i>Catostomus santaanae</i>	Santa Ana Sucker	FT	CSC	CNDDDB
Mammals				
<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	American badger	-	CSC	CNDDDB
Reptiles				
<i>Emys marmorata pallida</i>	Southwestern pond turtle	-	CSC	CNDDDB

Notes:

CNDDDB – California Natural Diversity Database search (Piru Quadrangle)

CSC – CDFG Species of Special Concern

FE – Federally Endangered

FT – Federally Threatened

SE – State Endangered

The California condor is a federal and state endangered species. The California condor is a large vulture and has the greatest wingspread of any North American land bird. It occupies mountain and foothill rangeland and forest habitats from northern Los Angeles County to San Luis Obispo County in the coast range and to Tulare County in the western Sierra Nevada. Vast expanses of open savannah, grasslands, and foothill chaparral within mountain ranges of moderate altitude are required. Nesting occurs in deep canyons that contain clefts in rock walls. California condors forage in grasslands and open woodlands in the foothills and can forage up to 100 miles from the roost or nest. This species has been previously been found within 2 miles of the project site.

The Sespe-Piru California condor critical habitat area is approximately 5 miles north of the Lodder project site. The project site contains foraging habitat for the California condor and this species may be a transient visitor at the site. Since the proposed project is a lot line adjustment and all open space areas will be placed under a restrictive covenant, the proposed project will generate less than significant impacts to the California condor.

The Santa Ana sucker is a federally threatened species that occurs in streams, including Piru Creek. There is at least 100 feet between the project site and Piru Creek. Since the open space of the Lodder project site will be in restrictive covenant, the proposed project will generate less than significant impacts on the Santa Ana sucker.

The American badger is a CDFG species of special concern. This species can occupy a diversity of habitats, including grasslands, savannas, and mountain meadows. Typically, sufficient food, friable soils, and relatively open, uncultivated ground are required. They prey on burrowing rodents such as gophers and ground squirrels, but will also eat other animals, reptiles, birds (and eggs), bees, and other insects. Badgers have been found near the project site, in some cases within 5 miles of the site. Since the proposed project is a lot line adjustment and open space areas will be placed under a restrictive covenant, the proposed project will generate less than significant impacts to the American badger.

The southwestern pond turtle is a CDFG species of special concern that inhabits slow moving water bodies. Piru Creek is adjacent to the eastern portion of the project site. There is at least 100 feet between the site and Piru Creek. In addition, since the eastern portion of the site is open space, it will be placed under restrictive covenant. Therefore, the proposed project will generate less than significant impacts to the southwestern pond turtle.

Special-status plant species that have been previously found within the Piru quadrangle are provided in Table 3. No special-status plant species were found during the survey completed April 25, 2007.

Table 3 Special-Status Plant Species that Could Occur at the Project Site

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federal Status	State Status	CNPS Status	Source(s)
<i>Aster greatae</i>	Greata's aster	-	-	1B	CNDDDB

CNDDDB – California Natural Diversity Database search (Piru Quadrangle)

California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List:

1B – Rare or endangered in California and elsewhere

Greata's aster is a perennial herb found in broad-leafed upland forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forests, and riparian woodland habitats. It may also be found in damp places in canyons up to and elevation 4,500 feet and blooms from August to October. Since the proposed project will place open space areas in a restrictive covenant, less than significant impacts to the Greata's aster would be generated by the project.

Development of the project site could generate indirect impacts to the special-status species listed in Tables 2 and 3. Impacts would be generated by lighting at the project site, noise generated during any future construction, increased sedimentation into Piru Creek caused by activities at the site, and loss of habitat. Wildlife are likely to relocate due to construction noise. However, given that open space areas will be placed under a restrictive covenant, less than significant indirect impacts will be generated by the project.

Mitigation Measures

Measure BR-1. The open space habitat within the site will be designated under a restrictive covenant that prohibits future development. Any proposed future development within this open space habitat at the site would require additional biological surveys and analysis, including but not limited to rare plant surveys. The open space areas placed under restrictive covenant shall remain open and not fenced, to allow for wildlife movement. RMA Planning shall monitor the implementation of this measure.

Measure BR-2. Preconstruction surveys for nesting birds must be conducted prior to construction, within 14 days of any proposed ground disturbance. If nesting birds are found during the survey, construction cannot commence during the nesting season (February 15 – September 1). RMA Planning shall monitor the implementation of this measure.

b. Wetlands Habitat.

A formal wetlands delineation of the project site has not been completed. Two channelized concrete drainages are present, one on the western boundary and the other through the central area of the project site. These drainages lack riparian vegetation and are concrete lined. Since these drainages do not meet the Ventura County significant wetland criteria, it is recommended that the 100-foot

wetlands buffer be reduced to 5-feet. A small portion of the eastern corner of the property lies within a 300-foot buffer for the adjacent Piru Creek, however, this area will be placed under restrictive covenant.

There are two adjacent drainage basins, one to the west and one north of the project site. Water is collected in these basins before being released into the two channelized concrete drainages that run through the site. The drainage basins lack riparian vegetation and no standing water was present during the site visit.

Mitigation Measures

Measure BR-3. If future development (ground-disturbance) is proposed within 100-feet of the two drainage basins, a wetlands delineation will be required. If the drainage basins meet the Ventura County, CDFG, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) definitions of wetlands, then a 100-foot setback between the wetlands and the project site must be established. The 100-foot setback must be surveyed by a licensed surveyor and recorded through a restrictive covenant, which must be recorded on the property title. All development shall be prohibited within the 100-foot setback. Brush clearance is prohibited within the 100-foot setback and wetland habitats. Any proposed future development within the 100-foot setback will require discretionary review and approval by Ventura County and would require permits from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). RMA Planning shall monitor the implementation of this measure.

Implementation of Measures BR-1 and BR-3 will reduce impacts to wetlands to a less than significant level.

c. Coastal Habitat.

The project site (located approximately 25 miles from the coast) is outside the boundary of the coastal zone and does not contain coastal habitats. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on coastal habitat.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

d. Migration Corridors.

In order to assess project impacts to wildlife corridors, the *Roads and Biodiversity Project: Guidelines for Safe Wildlife Passage* was reviewed (Ventura County 2005), along with the Wildlife Movement Map provided by Ventura County. The open space areas of the project site are designated as core wildlife habitat. The adjacent Piru Creek is designated as a landscape linkage and wildlife habitat. Since the proposed project is a lot line adjustment and since open space areas will be placed under restrictive covenant, less than significant impacts to wildlife migration corridors would be generated.

Mitigation Measures

Implementation of Measure BR-1, as described above, would reduce impacts to wildlife migration corridors to a less than significant level.

e. Locally Important Species/Communities.

Locally important species are those on the Ventura County Locally Important Species List or that meet Ventura County's definition of a Locally Important Species (Ventura County 2006b). Locally important communities are those that meet Ventura County's definition of a Locally Important Community, which includes habitats that are tracked by the CNDDDB.

The CNDDDB tracks natural plant communities that are considered sensitive. Sensitive communities are those that have a global or state rank. The global rank indicates the overall condition of the community throughout its global range. The state rank indicates the condition of the community in California and also includes a threat designation. A description of the global and state ranks is provided in Table 4.

Table 4 Description of Global and State Ranks

Global Rank	Description
G1	Less than 6 viable element occurrences or less than 1,000 individuals or less than 2,000 acres.
G2	6 to 20 element occurrences or 2,000 to 10,000 acres.
G3	21 to 100 element occurrences or 3,000 to 10,000 individuals or 10,000 to 50,000 acres.
G4	Apparently secure, this rank is clearly lower than G3 but factors exist to cause some concern.
G5	Population or stand demonstrably secure to ineradicable due to being commonly found in the world.
GH	All sites are historic; the element has not been seen for at least 20 years, but suitable habitat still exists.
GX	All sites are extirpated; the element is extinct in the wild.
GXC	Extinct in the wild, but exists in cultivation.
G1Q	The element is very rare, but there is a taxonomic question associated with it.
State Rank	Description
S1	Less than 6 element occurrences or less than 1,000 individuals or less than 2,000 acres S1.1 = very threatened S1.2 = threatened S1.3 = no current threats known
S2	6 to 20 element occurrences or 3,000 individuals or 2,000 to 10,000 acres S2.1 = very threatened S2.2 = threatened S2.3 = no current threats known
S3	21 to 100 element occurrences or 3,000 to 10,000 individuals or 10,000 to 50,000 acres. S3.1 = very threatened S3.2 = threatened S3.3 = no current threats known
S4	Apparently secure within California; this rank is clearly lower than S3 but factors exist to cause some concern. No threat rank.
S5	Demonstrable secure to ineradicable in California. No threat rank.
SH	All California sites are historic; the element has not been seen for at least 20 years, but suitable habitat still exists.
SX	All California sites are extirpated; this element is extinct in the wild.

Table 5 summarizes the results of the CNDDDB search for sensitive plant communities for the Piru Quadrangle (CNDDDB 2007). These plant communities were not observed at the project site during the site visit.

Table 5 Plant Communities that Could Occur within the Project Site

Plant Community	Global Ranking	State Ranking
California walnut woodland	G2	S2.1
Southern coast live oak riparian forest	G4	S4
Southern cottonwood willow riparian forest	G3	S3.2
Southern mixed riparian forest	G2	S2.1
Southern riparian scrub	G3	S3.2
Southern sycamore alder riparian woodland	G4	S4
Southern willow scrub	G3	S2.1
Valley oak woodland	G3	S2.1
Walnut forest	G1	S1.1

Source: CNDDDB 2007

Note: Plant communities with a global and state rank are considered sensitive habitat.

Southern willow scrub is present in the adjacent Piru Creek. However, since there is at least 100 feet between the site and Piru Creek, and since the open space within the site will be placed under a restrictive covenant, less than significant impacts to this sensitive plant community will be generated by the proposed project.

The project site contains multiple mature trees. Ventura County has tree protection regulations that protect qualified trees. Removal of protected tree species must be avoided whenever possible. Any proposed project that would remove oak, alder, cottonwood, pine, sycamore trees, etc. would result in a significant impact. Any protected tree removed at the project site (alder, cottonwood, sycamores, etc.) must be replaced in accordance with the County of Ventura Tree Protection Regulations and Guidelines. Replacement should be conducted on site when feasible and offsite only when no realistic replacement onsite is available. With the replacement of any removed trees in accordance with the County of Ventura Tree Protection Regulations and Guidelines, impacts to locally important species/communities would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

Measure BR-4. Any protected tree removed at the project site (oak, alder, cottonwood, pine, sycamores, etc.) must be replaced according to the County of Ventura Tree Protection Regulations and Guidelines. Replacement should be conducted on site when feasible and offsite only when no realistic replacement onsite is available. RMA Planning shall monitor the implementation of this measure.

Cumulative Impacts:

A list and map of proposed projects in the Piru area was provided by Ventura County and was reviewed to analyze cumulative impacts. Nearby projects included lot line adjustments, subdivisions, zone changes, lot legalization, and the construction of single family dwellings and town homes. The Lodder project is a lot line adjustment and there is no planned construction at this time. In addition, the majority of the site will be placed within a restrictive covenant prohibiting future development. Therefore, the proposed project would generate less than significant cumulative impacts. Any proposed future development within the open space placed under restrictive covenant will require additional analysis, including but not limited to rare plant surveys and a cumulative impacts analysis.

Section D. Mandatory Findings of Significance

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 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?	X	
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.)		X
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).		X
4. Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		X

Section E. Determination of Environmental Document

E. Determination of Environmental Document on the basis of this initial evaluation:	
<input type="checkbox"/> []	I find the proposed project could not have a significant effect on the environment, and a Negative Declaration should be prepared.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> [X]	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.
<input type="checkbox"/> []	I find 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.
<input type="checkbox"/> []	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 .

References:



California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB)

- 2007 Rarefind: A database application for the California Department of Fish and Game, Natural Heritage Division data, California Diversity Data Base, Sacramento. Commercial Version, data to expire December 2, 2007. Accessed on April 13, 2007.



Ventura County

- 2005 *Roads and Biodiversity Project: Guidelines for Safe Wildlife Passage*. A joint effort of the Ventura County Planning Division and the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara. June 2005.
- 2006a *Initial Study Assessment Guidelines*. Available online:
http://www.ventura.org/planning/ordinances_regs/ords_regs.htm. February, 2006.
- 2006b Ventura County's list of Locally Important Species. Available online:
http://www.ventura.org/planning/programs_services/bio_resources/bio_resources.htm).



Initial Study, Biological Resources Evaluation
Lodder Property

<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: North</p> <p>Notes: Drainage on western portion of property.</p>	
<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: Northeast</p> <p>Notes: Potted plants, western portion of property.</p>	

Initial Study, Biological Resources Evaluation
Lodder Property

<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: North</p> <p>Notes: Offsite drainage basin along western property boundary.</p>	
<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: North</p> <p>Notes: Hillside covered with chaparral, northwestern portion of property.</p>	

Initial Study, Biological Resources Evaluation
Lodder Property

<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: East</p> <p>Notes: Hilltop view of eastern portion of property.</p>	 A photograph taken from a hilltop looking east. In the foreground, there is a dry, grassy slope. In the middle ground, a large, flat, sandy area is visible, possibly a dry lake bed or a cleared field. To the left of this area, there are several small buildings and a parking lot. In the background, there are rolling hills and a small town or village nestled in a valley. The sky is clear and blue.
<p>APNs: 056-0-020-175, -220, -230, -240</p> <p>Date: 4/25/07</p> <p>Direction: North</p> <p>Notes: Drainage ditch through center of project site.</p>	 A photograph taken from a wooden bridge or walkway looking north. In the foreground, there is a wooden railing. Below the railing, a concrete drainage ditch runs through the center of the site. The ditch is surrounded by dry, sandy soil and some sparse vegetation. In the background, there are large, rocky hills and a large, white, cylindrical storage tank. Several vehicles and pieces of equipment are parked near the tank. The sky is clear and blue.

Initial Study, Biological Resources Evaluation
Lodder Property

APNs:
056-0-020-175,
-220, -230, -240

Date:
4/25/07

Direction:
Northeast

Notes:
View of hills on
northeastern
portion of
property.

