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May 29, 2007
Project# 06-91301

Christiaan & Patricia Mostert
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Subject: Results of a Rare Plant Survey for APN No. 700-0-070-470 Yerba Buena Road, Ventura County, California

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mostert:

Rincon Consultants, at your request, conducted a focused rare plant survey within the proposed home site for a single family dwelling, swimming pool, tennis court and associated access driveway located immediately northeast of Yerba Buena Road, Ventura County, California (Figure 1). The 80-acre property is identified by Ventura County Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) # 700-0-070-470. The existing conditions of the site were previously described in a Biological Constraints Analysis report to you prepared October 2, 2006 (Rincon Consultants).

The intent of the survey was to determine the presence or absence of several special status species including Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), Western dichondra (*Dichondra occidentalis*) and other special-status rare plants within the home site, probable fuel management zone, and along the proposed access driveway. Rincon biologists surveyed the site on April 9 and May 14, 2007 to ensure that the conspicuous vegetative time for the western dichondra, and bloom time for Plummer's mariposa lily and other listed plants was adequately bracketed. No federal or state listed species were found within the proposed development area, including the homesite, tennis court, swimming pool, and access driveway, during either survey. Western dichondra (*Dichondra occidentalis*), a Ventura County Locally Important Species, was found within the survey area.

Methodology

Focused surveys for special status plant species occurred on approximately 16.1 acres of the middle southern portion of the 80 acre property. The survey area included the proposed homesite and the access road area (Figure 2). The lower (southwestern) portion of the access road is located within an easement on the adjoining property to the south and included a survey area of about 5.1 acres, for a total survey area of 21.1 acres. The surveys were conducted on April 9 and May 14, 2007, by Rincon biologists Michelle Tollett and Julie Broughton.

A topographic map showing the proposed building areas and grading plans was provided by Randy Toedter (Ramseyer and Associates), as well as aerial photographs provided by the County of Ventura. These were used during the field surveys to assist in mapping the onsite habitat types and any observed special-status plant occurrences. In addition, a Trimble® GTX, with sub-meter accuracy was used to place polygons around sensitive plant communities, pin-point locations of sensitive species and assist in determining the extent of the survey area. During both surveys, the entire area was traversed on foot using meandering transects to ensure thorough coverage of the site. Accessible areas in all cardinal directions from the home site and fire clearance areas were also briefly investigated to determine if any special-status plants occurred in those areas. At the time of the April 9 survey, most of the annual and perennial plants present were in bloom, except for the dudleya species, which were in bloom during the May 14 survey. At the time of the May 14 survey, many of the spring-flowering annuals had set seed and were beginning to mature, some withered, leaving poorly recognizable dried material.

Accessible areas on adjacent ridgelines to the north and northwest outside of the survey area and proposed development were also briefly investigated to determine if any special-status plants occurred in that portion of the site. All plant species observed onsite that were identifiable were recorded. Unknown taxa observed in the field were collected and brought to the laboratory for identification. Field surveys followed accepted protocols developed by the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and were spaced throughout the target species blooming periods to ensure a thorough inventory of the site. Particular attention was paid to the grassland and coastal scrub areas containing a dense understory of *Nasella pulchra*, the perennial native purple needlegrass, as these areas represented the most suitable habitat on the site for the rare plant species that were the target of this survey.

The special-status species targeted in this series of surveys were identified as potentially occurring onsite in our previous field investigations of the area (Rincon Consultants, 2006), review of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, 2007), as well as our own knowledge of the area. For this study, special-status species assessed for the potential to occur onsite are those plants listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA); those listed or proposed for listing as rare, threatened, or endangered by the CDFG under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA); those listed as rare by the CDFG under the Native Plant Protection Act, and plants occurring on lists 1B and 2 of the CNPS's *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California* (CNPS, 2001), List 4 plants were not recorded, unless they appeared on the Ventura County Locally Important Species Plant List (March 2005). Table 1 presents a list of species with potential to occur in the project area based upon habitat and elevation.

Table 1 Special Status Plants Potentially Present Within Subject Parcel

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
Petite long-spurred plectritis	*Plectritis ciliosa ssp. insignis*	VC LIS
Plummer's mariposa lily	*Calochortus plummerae*	CNPS List 1B, VC LIS
Orcutt's pincushion	*Chaenactis glabriuscula* var. *orcuttiana*	CNPS List 1B.1
Showy fiddleneck	*Amsinckia spectabilis*	VC LIS
Western dichondra	*Dichondra occidentalis*	CNPS List 4, VC LIS

CSC = CDFG Special concern species; CNPS = California Native Plant Society; VC LIS = Ventura County Locally Important Species

Results and Discussion

Habitats. The proposed development area is primarily in a natural state, except for disturbance associated with unpaved dirt access roads traversing several areas of the site and previously cleared patch in the south central portion of the site (Figure 3). The area surveyed consisted primarily of intact Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub blending towards Mixed Chaparral per the community definitions of Holland, 1986, and have been mapped as the "Mixed Sage Series" per the Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf classification system. Dominant plants include purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), ashy-leaved buckwheat (*Eriogonum cinereum*), Santa Barbara locoweed (*Astragalus trichopodus*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) and chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*). Two patches within the survey area can be described as the Purple Needlegrass Series under the classification system of Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf (1995) and California valley needlegrass grassland under Holland's classification. It is noted that purple needlegrass occurred not only in these patches, but as part of the dense understory in the undisturbed sage scrub.

The disturbed areas mapped within the study area contain non-native species such as ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*). The disturbed areas vary in dominant vegetation ranging from annual grassland to tocalote invaded clearings. The coastal sage scrub and purple needlegrass grassland at the proposed homesite are partially degraded by the presence of various ruderal species. The area currently proposed for buildout of the swimming pool and tennis courts on the southern and eastern edges of the housing pad clearance areas are within a mature stand of coastal scrub containing larger, taller species such as *Malosoma laurina, Artemisia californica, Salvia leucopylla, Salvia mellifera, Rhus integrifolia* and *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (See Appendix A for comprehensive Plant List).

Sensitive Plant Species. Based upon a search of the CNDDB database and Ventura County Locally Important Species List, and a previous visit to the site, 5 sensitive plant species have the potential to occur on site, none of which are federal or state listed (see Table 1). One special-status plant species, western dichondra, was observed on the subject property in multiple locations during the focused rare plant surveys (Figure 4). No additional special-status plant species were observed onsite during these 2007 surveys. The

following species account briefly presents legal status, relevant ecological and range information, and where the western dichondra was observed onsite during the focused surveys.

Western dichondra is a CNPS List 4.2 species that currently has no state or federal listing status. Western dichondra is a perennial matted, stoloniferous herb in the Convulvaceae family (Morning Glory) that occurs in a variety of habitat types throughout southern California including chaparral, valley grassland, foothill grassland, northern coastal scrub and coastal sage scrub. This species generally blooms from March to July, and is known to occur from San Diego area northward to the northern Santa Barbara County border; occurrences have been documented in Marin County as well. This plant occurs throughout the study area at varying densities, with those locales of apparent greatest density illustrated on Figure 4; however, this should not be construed as absence in other areas. This species was also found growing within disturbed dirt road areas. The highest density of the species appeared to be along the upper slopes near the homesite, as well as several areas further north and northwest of the study area within the property that were briefly checked for occurrence of rare plants (Figure 4).

Other Species. Catalina mariposa lily, a CNPS List 4 species that is not listed on the Ventura County Locally Important Species List, was found in abundance throughout the site. Catalina mariposa lily is a perennial, bulbiferous herb in the lily family (Liliaceae) that occurs in a variety of habitat types throughout southern California including grasslands, scrublands and woodlands. This species generally blooms from February to May, and is known to occur from the Los Angeles area northward to San Luis Obispo County. Approximately 200 distinct Catalina mariposa lily occurrences were observed within the study area and adjacent areas. As this species does not occur on any list other than the CNPS Inventory, it is not considered a special-status species, however, due to industry standard practice, it is included here for informational purposes. In addition, while the Plummer's mariposa lily was considered to have potential to occur onsite, it was not found within the survey area or adjacent areas briefly surveyed. While precedent rainfall has been very low this season, the presence of Catalina mariposa lily in such abundance indicates favorable conditions for bulbiferous species.

Several live-forever species (*Dudleya* sp.) in the Santa Monica Mountains are sensitive species, but most are known to occur on specific substrates, particularly those of volcanic origin. As stated in the Biological Constraints Analysis (Rincon Consultants, 2006), the property lies within soils consisting of the Chumash-Boades-Malibu association (loamy shale and sandstone) over the Lower Topanga formation (marine and brackish non-marine). The only dudleya recorded within the survey area, was along a roadside cut and was found to be lanceleaf liveforever (*Dudleya lanceolata*). No other *Dudleya* species were found.

Ventura County Mapping Overlay Please note that maps provided by the Ventura County GIS department (Map 3: LU06-0088, 700-0-070-470, Sensitive Species Map and Map 4: LU06-0088, 700-0-070-470, Waterbodies Buffered Map) were used to create Figures 3 and 4, as requested by Dan Klemann of Ventura County Planning Department (e-mail dated Monday April 30, 2007). The maps included the residence, associated uses, proposed access

roads, and two fuel management zones – a 100 foot and 200 foot. Please note that while fuel management is required in the first 100 feet from structures, it is not for the additional 100 feet and per our conversation with you, there are no plans to alter vegetation within the 200 foot area. Almost all of the 100-foot buffer zone as mapped by the County lies within the proposed grading footprint. The County maps contained two resources of concern by Ventura County and are discussed briefly below.

- *Sensitive Species Map* – contained a polygon for the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). The polygon overlaps approximately 50 feet of the proposed access driveway, however, the known Monarch roosting site is located approximately 400 feet west across Yerba Buena Road within a eucalyptus grove. The access easement area does not contain any eucalyptus trees and is mainly within a landscaped area owned by the southern neighbor. Please refer to Figure 5 for photographs that illustrate the lack of potential for Monarch butterfly roosts to occur within this area.

- *Waterbodies Buffered Map* – contained a polygon for the unnamed "blue line" stream that joins Little Sycamore Creek further south. Although this stream is within 100 feet of the existing paved driveway, this riparian resource lies on the other side of Yerba Buena Road and would not be affected by the proposed access road construction. The area to be disturbed is a combination of landscaped area, dirt road and coastal sage scrub. Please refer to Figure 5 for photos of this area.

Impacts and Recommendations

Construction of the proposed single family dwelling, tennis court, swimming pool, gazebo and access driveway would remove a portion of the western dichondra population observed at the site. Those areas containing the highest density of western dichondra plants within the survey area total 11.0 acres, with an additional 6.2 acres in the briefly surveyed area (Figure 4). Of this 17 acres, 3.4 acres lie within the proposed grading footprint. This species is included on the CNPS's List 4: Plants Of Limited Distribution – a Watch List for plants of limited distribution or that occur infrequently throughout a broader area in California. Very few of the plants constituting List 4 meet the definitions of Section 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection Act) or Sections 2062 and 2067 (California Endangered Species Act) of the California Fish and Game Code, and few, if any, are eligible for state listing (CNPS, 2001). The vulnerability or susceptibility to threat for western dichondra appears relatively low at this time.

The grading for the site would result in the loss of 19.8% of the highest density known locales of western dichondra within the site; however, it is also found in lower density in scattered areas outside the mapped area, and can be expected at various densities in those portions of the site that were not surveyed. Significance criteria regarding individual special status plants and plant communities concern substantial reductions in population numbers or occupied habitat, or substantial reduction in acreage of those communities listed as sensitive or riparian habitat. Section 15065 of the State CEQA Guidelines also concerns actual elimination of communities or habitat, or the loss of individual or restriction in range of plants listed under state and federal Endangered Species Acts. It is noted that any

reductions in plant communities or habitats are also relative to the regional supply of suitable habitat for individual organisms. In this instance, the project site contains a substantial population of a plant that, while uncommon, is still relatively widespread and has substantial habitat available within the public controlled lands of the Santa Monica Mountains. In addition, substantial numbers of western dichondra would still exist within the site such that the proposed development would not be expected to eliminate the plants at this locale, which is just a small part of the overall population expected here and on adjoining lands. It is our biological opinion that the impact to this plant from the project is adverse, but less than significant from a CEQA perspective; nonetheless, the actual determination of significance is dependent on the CEQA lead agency, namely Ventura County. No mitigation measures are considered to be necessary, though it is noted that given the dichondra's presence in the ruderal disturbed areas, it is likely to naturally re-establish in the graded areas within the fuel management zone.

As requested, we have also determined that the proposed grading would disturb 4.45 acres of mixed sage scrub, 0.38 acres of disturbed mixed sage scrub, 0.23 acres of disturbed native grassland, and 0.06 acres of ruderal vegetation. A native grassland area (0.14 acre) north of the house is within the 200-foot fuel management zone; as previously noted, no vegetation changes are proposed for this area mapped by the County and this area is anticipated to be maintained as a native grassland. It is noted that other native grasslands are apparent on the parcel outside the survey area as visible on Figures 2 and 3.

We trust that this information will assist with your reporting obligations at this time. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns regarding the results of our surveys or would like to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

RINCON CONSULTANTS, INC.

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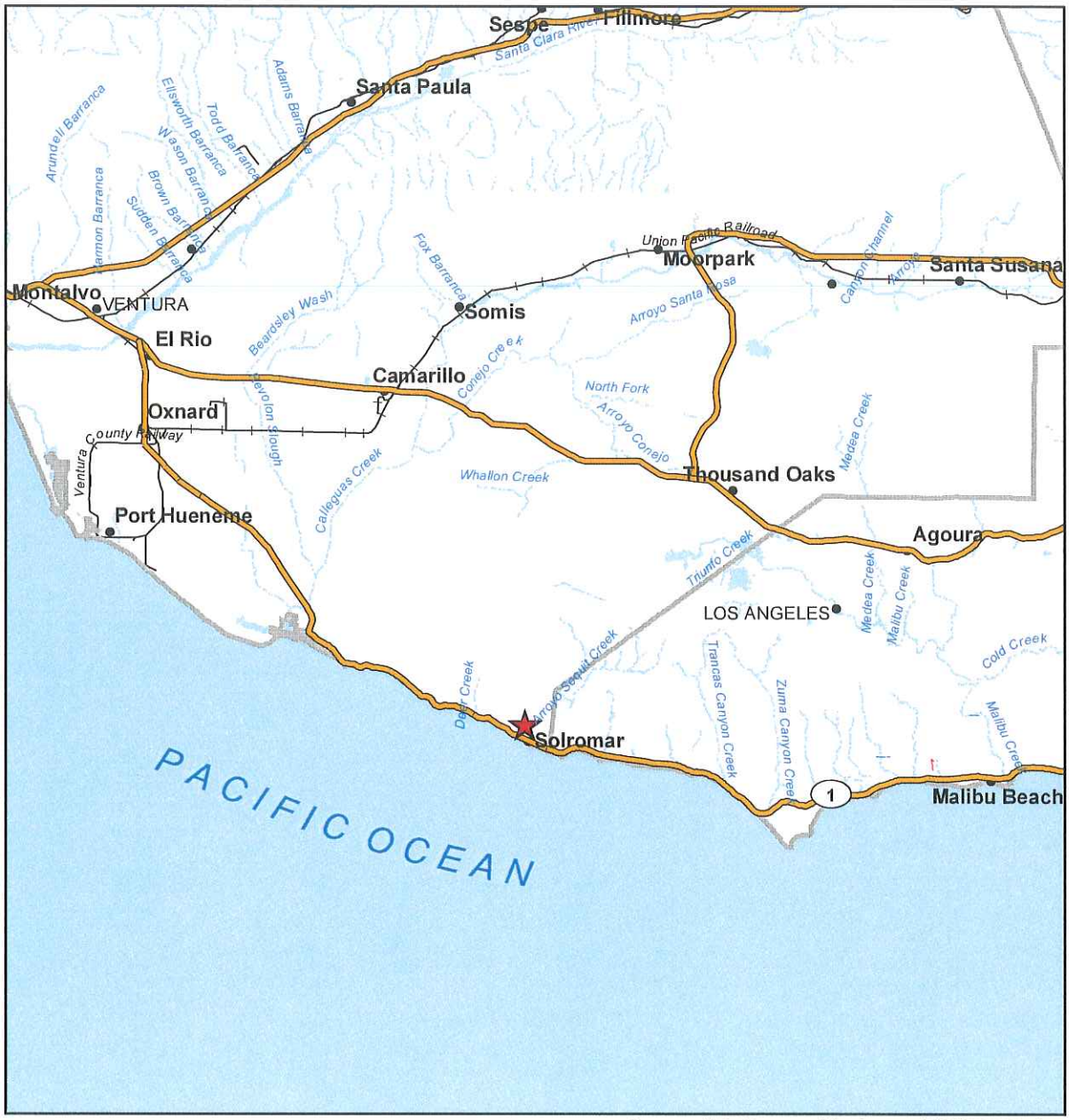
Biologist

Julie Broughton, PhD. (Candidate)
Senior Botanist

John Dreher
Senior Biologist

Duane Vander Pluym, D. ESE
Principal Biologist

Attachment: *Figure 1 Vicinity Map*
Figure 2 Focused Survey Area
Figure 3 Habitat Map
Figure 4 Sensitive Species Map
Figure 5 Photo Plate
Attachment A – Plant List



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census TIGER 2000 data.

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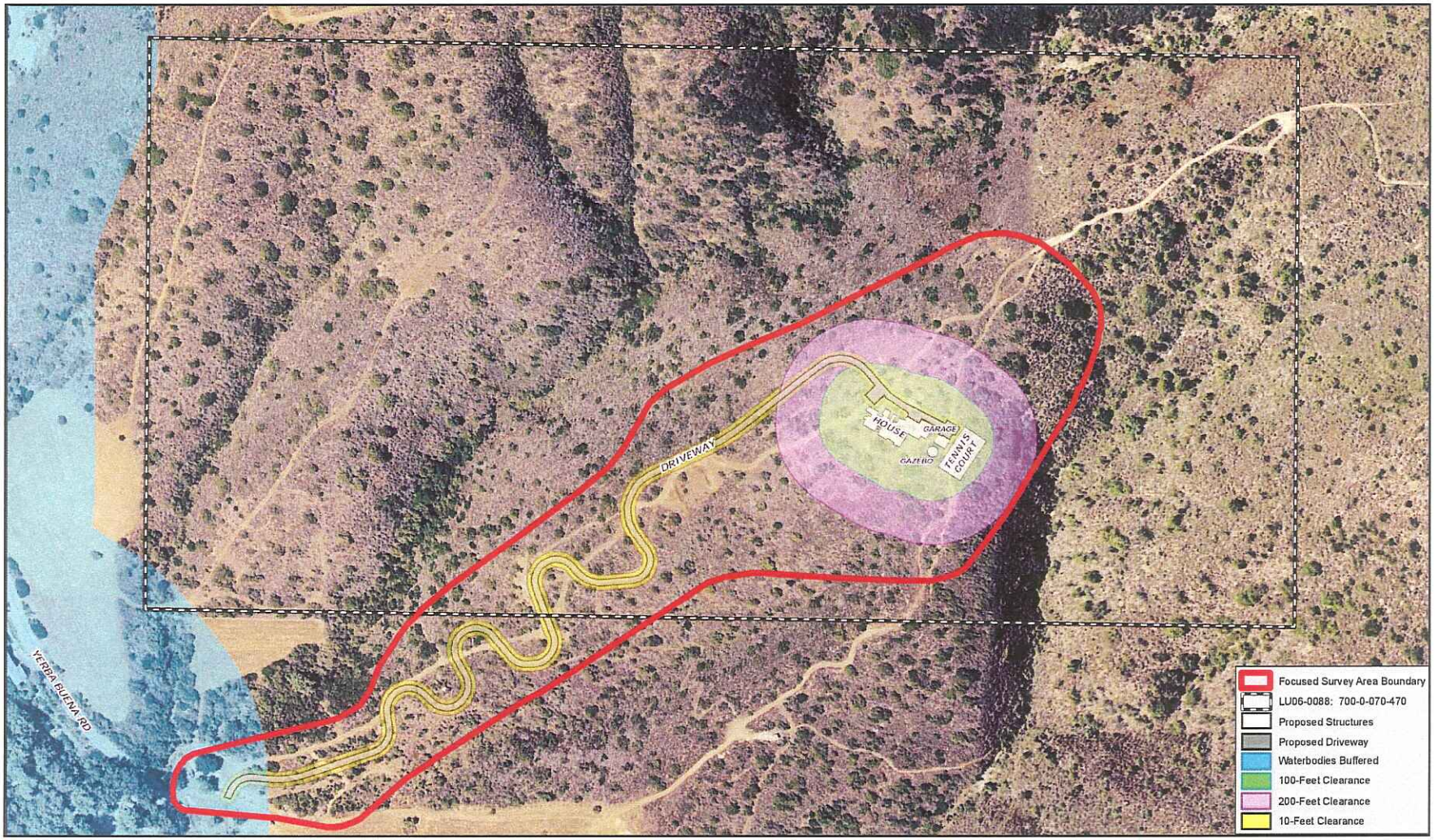
0 5 10 Miles

Project Location

Vicinity Map

Figure 1

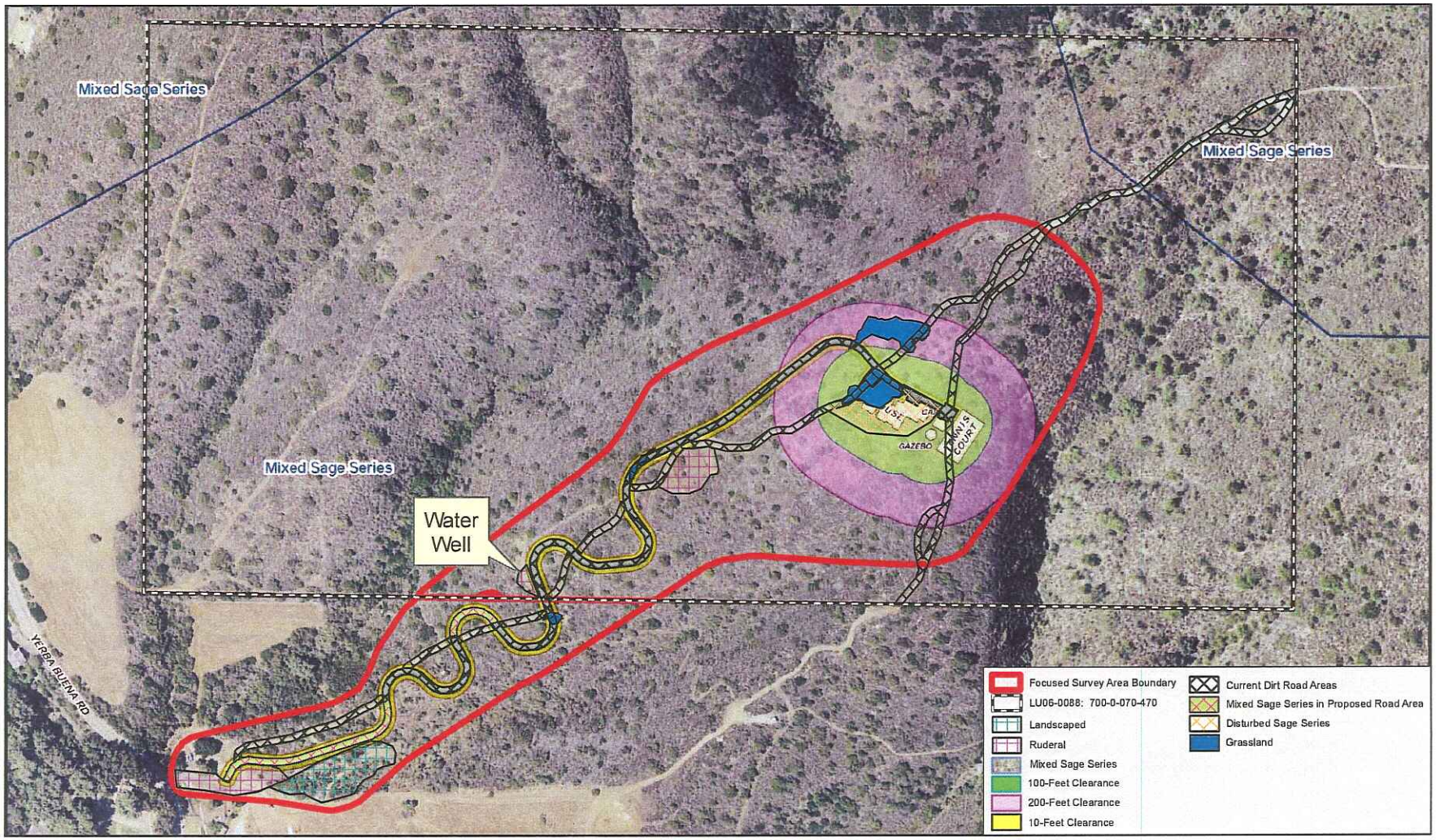
Mostert Property



Source: Ventura County RMA, 2007, NAIP 2005 Image, and Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2007.

Focused Survey Area

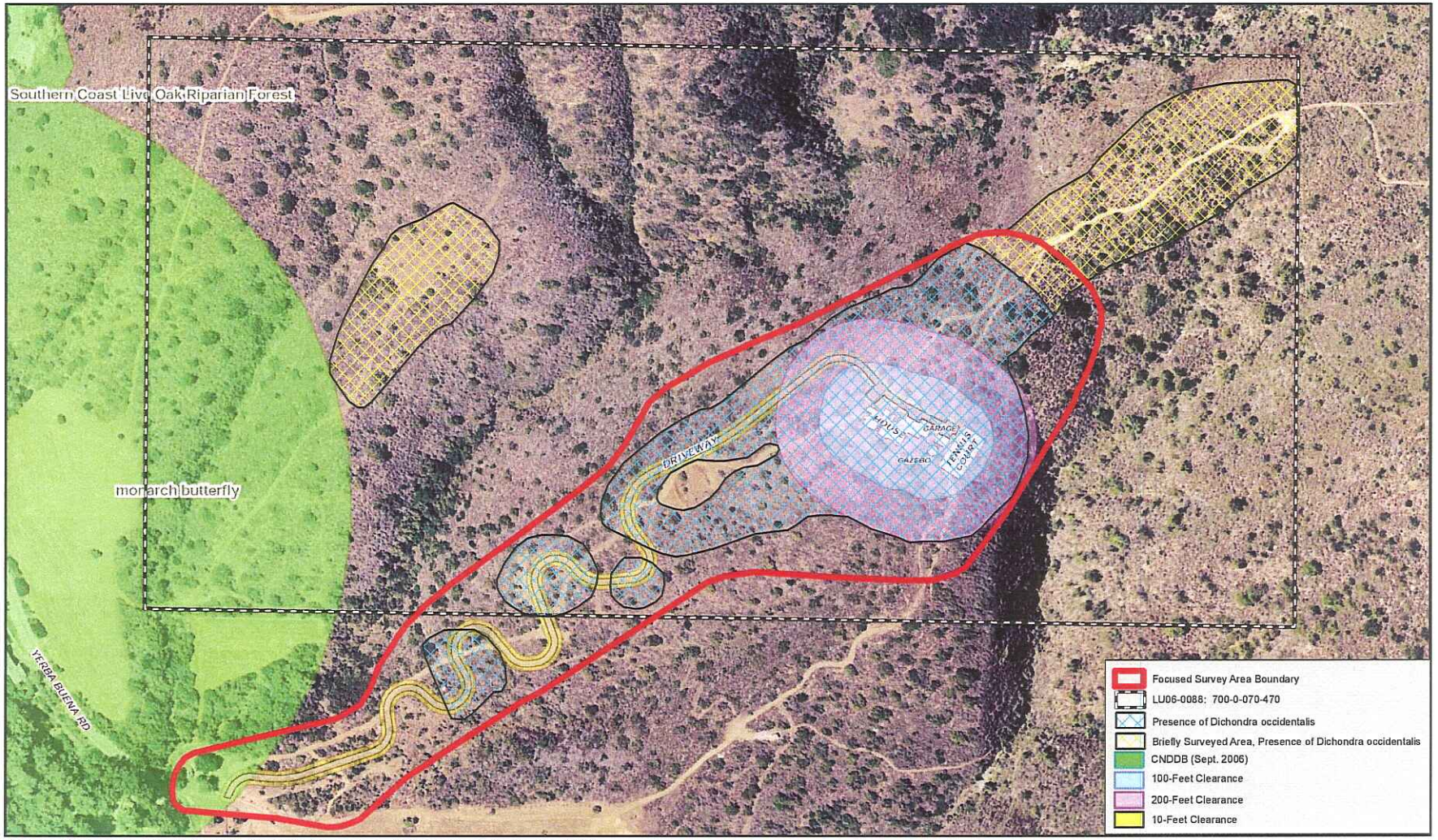
Figure 2
Mostert Property



Source: Ventura County RMA, 2007, NAIP 2005 Image, and Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2007..

Habitat Map

Figure 3
Mostert Property



Source: Ventura County RMA, 2007, NAIP 2005 Image, and Rincon Consultants, Inc., 2007.

Sensitive Species Map

Figure 4
Mostert Property

Photo 1 - Southern portion of proposed driveway easement area looking southwest. Current landscaping and paved area visible.

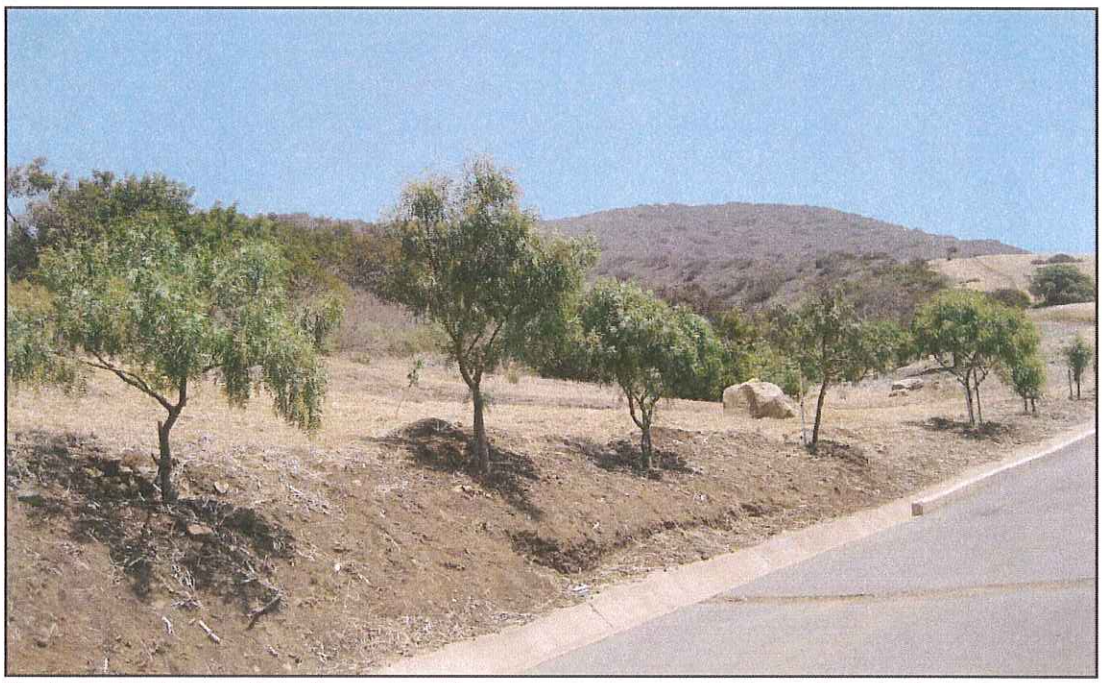


Photo 2 - Southern portion of proposed driveway easement area looking northeast. Planted pepper trees in the foreground. No waterbodies or Monarch butterfly roosting areas in this zone.

Scientific Name	Common Name
Achillea millefolium	white yarrow
Alium sp.	Wild onion
Anagallis arvensis	scarlet pimpernel
Artemisia californica	California sagebrush
Asclepias fascicularis	narrow-leaf milkweed
Astragalus trichopodus var. *phoxus*	Santa Barbara locoweed
Avena barbata	slender wild oat
Baccharis pilularis var. *consanguinea*	coyote brush
Brassica nigra	black mustard
Bromus diandrus	ripgut brome
Bromus hordeaceus	soft chess
Bromus madritensis ssp. *rubens*	red brome
Calystegia macrostegia ssp. *cyclostegia*	Wild morning glory
Castilleja affinis ssp. *affinis*	coast Indian paintbrush
Castilleja exserta ssp. exserta	purple owl's clover
Calochortus catalinae	Catalina mariposa lily
Carduus pycnocephalus	Italian thistle
Ceanothus spinosus	greenbark ceanothus
Centaurea melitensis	tocalote
Chamaesyce albomarginata	Rattlesnake weed
Chlorogalum pomeridianum	soap plant
Chorizanthe staticoides	Turkish rugging
Conyza canadensis	horseweed
Convolvulus arvensis	bindweed
Cuscuta californica	Chaparral dodder
Daucus pusillus	wild Carrot / Rattlesnake weed
Dichelostemma capitatum	blue dicks
Dichondra occidentalis	Western dichondra
Dodecatheon clevelandii	Shooting star
Dudleya lanceolata	Lance-leaf live forever
Encelia californica	California brittlebush
Eriogonum cinereum	Ash leaf buckwheat
Eriogonum elongatum	longstem buckwheat
Eriogonum fasciculatum	California buckwheat
Eriophyllum confertiflorum	golden-yarrow
Erodium botrys	storksbill
Erodium cicutarium	red-stem filaree
Eschscholzia californica	California poppy
Eucrypta chrysanthemifolia	common eucrypta
Foeniculum vulgare	fennel
Galium angustifolium ssp.*angustifolium*	Narrow-leaved bedstraw

Scientific Name	Common Name
Galium aparine	common bedstraw
Gnaphalium bicolor	Two-toned everlasting
Gnaphalium californicum	everlasting
Hazardia squarrosa	saw-toothed goldenbush
Hemizonia fasciculata	tarweed
Heteromeles arbutifolia	toyon
Hordeum murinum ssp. *leporinum*	barley
Isomeris arborea	Coast bladderpod
Lamarckia aurea	golden top
Lepidium nitidum	Shiny peppergrass
Lessingia filaginifolia var. filaginifolia	Common California aster
Leymus condensatus	giant wild rye
Linanthus dianthiflorus	ground pink
Lotus scoparius	deerweed
Lupinus bicolor	miniature lupine
Lupinus succulentus	arroyo lupine
Malacothamnus fasciculatus	Chaparral Mallow
Malacothrix saxatilis	cliff aster
Malosma laurina	laurel sumac
Malva parviflora	cheeseweed
Marah macrocarpus var. macrocarpus	wild cucumber
Marrubium vulgare	horehound
Mimulus aurantiacus	sticky monkeyflower
Mirabilis californica	wishbone plant
Nassella pulchra	purple needlegrass
Opuntia prolifera	Jumping cholla
Opuntia littoralis	Coast prickly pear
Phacelia parryi	Parry's phacelia
Phacelia ramosissima var. *latifolia*	branching phacelia
Piperia unalascensis	Orchid
Prunus ilicifolia	Holly-leaved cherry
Raphanus sativus	Wild radish
Rhus integrifolia	Lemonade berry
Ribes californicum var. hesperium	Hillside gooseberry
Ricinus communis	castor bean
Rosa californica	California wild rose
Rumex crispus	curly dock
Salvia apiana	White sage
Salvia leucopylla	purple sage
Salvia mellifera	black sage
Sambucus mexicana	Mexican elderberry

Scientific Name	Common Name
Sanicula arguta	sharp-toothed sanicle
Schinus molle	Peruvian pepper tree
Solanum douglasii	nightshade
Solanum xantii	purple nightshade
Stephanomeria virgata	tall stephanomeria
Trifolium sp.	clover
Verbena lasiostachys	verbena
Vicia sativa	spring vetch
Yucca whipplei	chaparral yucca