

# COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: February 16, 2005

Requestor: Kim Rodriguez, AICP

Project: SD04-0058 (Parcel Map 5554)

Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification: Potential habitat onsite to support several rare plants and wildlife.

## A. CHECKLIST

| Biological Resources<br>Issues             | Project Impact<br>Degree of Effect  |                                     |                                     |                          | Cumulative Impact<br>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 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"/> |
| d. migration corridors                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" 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 consists of the subdivision of a legal parcel totaling about 2.5 acres into two parcels. The southerly parcel (Parcel 1) would be 1 acre and contains the existing residence. The northerly parcel (Parcel 2) would be 1.5 acres and is currently vacant. The project site is located in the Conejo Valley, south of Newbury Park in a rural residential area. The site is situated between two private roads, La Cam Road to the south and Alice Ann Road to the north. The private roads are accessed via La Cam Road (public) from Lynn Road, which is approximately 1,000 feet to the northwest. Alice Ann Road would be the primary access to the northerly parcel.

The site contains a single family residence including a separate garage unit which is situated at the southernmost portion of the property off of La Cam Road. The parcel is designated rural residential by the Ventura County General Plan and Zoned "R-E" (Rural Exclusive - 1 acre minimum). The applicant has proposed the subdivision to facilitate the future development of a single-family residence on Parcel 2. Future development actions would be confined to the upslope portions of Parcel 2 given the geologic constraints and associated structural setbacks. Therefore, development actions would encroach on the natural habitat within the central portion of the property.

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 840 to 1,020 feet above mean sea level. The site is situated between a rural residential parcel with horse corrals to the west, rural residential use to the east, open space to the south, and rural residential uses to the

north. The site consists of steeply sloped north-facing topography that drains to the north via sheet flow across the property.

A site visit was conducted by Rincon biologist John Dreher on February 8, 2005 to determine the general extent of biological resources on the property. The field visit included a reconnaissance of the property via transects of convenience with a cursory review of the vegetation located onsite.

Upon review of the geologic map of the area (Dibblee, Jr., Ehrenspeck, 1990) the site is underlain by older surficial sediments of alluvial gravel, sand, and clay and Conejo volcanic bedrock along the southern half of the property. No Conejo volcanic rock outcrops were observed.

Native habitat onsite consisted of mixed chaparral with Venturan sage scrub components and coast live oak woodland. The dense native vegetation was located primarily in the central portion of the property. The dominant plant species observed included buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), phacelia (*Phacelia* sp.), bristly ox-tongue (*Picris echioides*). Associated secondary species included California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), sage (*Salvia* spp.), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), laurel sumac (*Rhus laurina*), monkey flower (*Mimulus* sp.), canyon sunflower (*Venegasia carpesioides*), and wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*). Native bunchgrasses were also scattered in the understory (<5% cover).

The existing fire clearance onsite extends approximately 250 feet downslope from the existing residence. The vegetation within this area is dominated by non-native annual grasses (*Avena* and *Bromus* species). The northern (downslope) quarter of the property is highly disturbed and cleared of native vegetation. Walking paths or trails are present throughout the site. Additionally, a row of pepper trees were noted along the northern property boundary.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (January 2005) listed several special-status species that could be present within native coastal sage scrub areas in the vicinity of the project. 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

It is noted that nearly all native birds, their nests, eggs, and young are protected under the California Fish and Game Code and Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). A variety of common birds are likely to use the site for nesting and foraging activities.



Biological resources issues:

- a. **Endangered, threatened, or rare species.** This parcel subdivision would have no immediate direct impacts to endangered, threatened, or rare species that might be located on this site. However, the applicant has proposed the subdivision to allow the future construction of a single-family residence on Parcel 2. Because of geologic restrictions, homesite development would encroach on the natural habitat within the central portion of the property and could affect listed species if present. Species of particular concern are Rayless ragwort and Plummer's mariposa-lily, which if present, would not have been in bloom and identifiable at the time of the field survey. The loss of these species or their habitat may be considered significant. Therefore, mitigation is suggested for the protection of sensitive species and associated habitat at the time that further development plans are proposed.

It is noted that Lyon's pentachaeta has a potential to occur at the site within the upper (southern) portion of the property given the underlying volcanics. However, given that this species has not been found south of Highway 101 in this region of the Conejo Valley (personal communication, R. Burgess) and the density and type of non-native vegetation present, its presence is unlikely and no significant impacts to this species are anticipated. Additionally, this portion of the site is undevelopable and the proposed action would exclude disturbance in this area beyond the existing fire clearance activities.

Although there is the potential for the coast horned lizard and western whiptail to occur onsite, neither of these species are listed as endangered, threatened, or rare. If present, impacts to these species are anticipated to be less than significant given the anticipated size and scale of future development. No mitigation would be required.

- b. **Wetland Habitats.** No wetland habitats were observed onsite and none are expected. No impact.
- c. **Coastal Habitat.** The site is not located within the coastal zone. As such, site development would have no effect on coastal resources.
- d. **Migration Corridors.** The parcel is approximately 2.5 acres in size and is surrounded by rural residential uses and native habitat areas to the north. Species passing through the project site may be partially blocked by future development, but will alternately be able to utilize adjacent open land for passage, especially the adjacent open space to the south of the property. Given existing limits to wildlife movement, potential development of one additional residence would not present a significant barrier to migration. No mitigation would be required.
- e. **Locally Important Species/Communities.** Several native coast live oak trees are concentrated in the central portion of the lot. Native trees are protected by the Ventura County Zoning Ordinance per section 8107-25 and loss of native trees would result in a potentially significant impact. The current action (lot split) would not impact any of these resources. However, development of the residence would impact these native tree resources and would require appropriate setbacks and/or mitigation per Ventura County ordinance requirements.



### 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 ☒

Future development inclusive of fire clearance may impact biological resources potentially present onsite. Activities that would disturb or remove native habitat could impact sensitive biological resources. To avoid potentially significant impacts to biological resources, the following measures are recommended prior to any future development or grading.

- **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 including a 50-foot buffer.
- **Nesting Birds.** Construction is recommended to occur outside of the bird nesting season (~March 1 – September 15). If work must occur during this period, a pre-construction survey for nesting birds is required. Any active nests must be buffered in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game until the nests are no longer utilized.
- **Native Trees.** If a suitable building envelope cannot be developed without removing or disturbing oak resources, the removal of any oak trees (or other Ventura County protected trees) shall be mitigated for in compliance with the Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance.

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

Negative Declaration ☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☒ EIR Required ☐

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

John Dreher  
Associate Biologist  
Rincon Consultants, Inc.

February 16, 2005

Phone: 641-1000 Ext. 34

## F. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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