COUNTY OF VENTURA
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: March 14, 2005
Requestor: Kim Rodriguez, ACIP
Project: SD05-0002 (Parcel Map 5578)
Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No
Justification: Potential habitat and soil conditions onsite may support several rare plants and several sensitive vertebrates. Field check performed to determine if specialized habitat for rare species was present.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	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	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
b. wetland habitat	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
c. coastal habitat	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
d. migration corridors	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
e. locally important species/communities	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

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 proposed project will subdivide one vacant parcel of 0.76 acres (30,594 sq ft) into four lots: Parcel 1 at 8,350 sq ft (0.19 ac), Parcel 2 at 7,471 sq ft (0.17 ac), Parcel 3 at 7,705 sq ft (0.18 ac) and Parcel 4 at 7,068 sq ft (0.16 ac).

The subject property is located at 212 River Street in the Community of Piru in an area zoned R-P-D-6U (Residential Planned Development, 6 Dwelling Units per Acre), USGS 7.5' Quad Piru, Township 4N, Range 18W, Section 20 S ½. Site access is from River Street. The topography is generally flat with a less than one percent slope to the east, and an average elevation of 665 ft above mean sea level. To the north, south and west, the property is bordered by tract housing, and to the east by a citrus grove. Nearby drainages include Piru Creek 0.3 mile to the west, the Santa Clara River channel approximately 1.0 mile to the south, and Real Wash 0.6 mile to the east. No drainage channels were apparent on the property.

A site visit was conducted by Rincon biologist Kimberly Toal on March 22, 2005 to determine the general extent of biological resources on the property. The field visit included a reconnaissance of the entire property on foot.

Soils on the site consist of the Moho loam association, and as such are calcareous, well-drained, and slightly hard. Most of the area is overgrown with a thick growth of weedy vegetation, but a

few bare areas, including the access road paralleling the north boundary of the property, indicate the presence of compacted soils with bits of visible shale.

The subject property has been highly disturbed, as evidenced by ruts and dirt piles, and has a variety of garbage on site including two rusted truck chassis, piles of bark and wood, a battered water tank, and an overturned wooden boat hull. The vegetation is dominated by ruderal, weedy grasses and forbs including wild oats (*Avena fatua* and *A. barbata*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), bur clover (*Medicago polymorpha*), cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*), filaree (*Erodium fasciculatum*), horehound (*Marrabium vulgare*), ragweed (*Ambrosia spp.*), mustard (*Brassica or Sisymbrium spp.*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), and jimson weed (*Datura wrightii*). Two coastal sage scrub species, California sagebrush and coyote brush (*Artemisia californica* and *Baccharis pilularis*) also occur on site in a few discrete clumps amounting to less than 100 sq ft. Four locust trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia)*, two California pepper trees (*Schinus molle*), and two unknown ornamental trees also occur along the northern boundary of the site close to the entrance road. A large swath of ground on the western boundary along River Street is completely devoid of vegetation and may have been treated with herbicide.

Topographic low areas are at the center of the property and in the southwest corner where a storm drain directs runoff that would otherwise pond at the base of a cinder block wall separating the subject property from an adjacent housing development to the south. Low areas in the center of the property show some evidence of ponding and soil cracking, but there are no wetlands or obvious drainage channels on site, and water flowing through the storm drain does not appear to backup for any significant length of time.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (January 2005) listed several special-status species that could be present within native coastal sage scrub areas. Given this habitat, the elevation range, and the underlying geology, the following special-status species have the potential to occur on the site.

- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) is found in the arid foothills and mountain ranges of southern and central California. They roost in rocky cliffs or in trees, and forage in foothills, grasslands and oak woodlands. State and federally listed endangered.
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) nests in growth coniferous stands or in the deciduous riparian areas that are closest to streams and forages from the protection of dense tree cover from which it ambushes small birds. State Species of Special Concern.
- Plummer's Mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), found in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal scrub. CNPS List 1B. Blooms from May to July.
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*), occurs in coastal sage scrub habitats with sandy or calcareous soil. CNPS List 1A; state listed as endangered and a federal candidate for listing as threatened. Blooms from April through June.
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) occurs on alluvial fans in Chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and cismontane woodland habitats. CNPS List 1B; state and federally listed as endangered. Blooms from April through June.
- Coast (San Diego) horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum (blainvillei)*), found in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. A State Species of Concern.

Biological resources issues:

a. **Endangered, threatened, or rare species.** This parcel subdivision would have no immediate direct impacts to endangered, threatened, or rare species located in the site vicinity. The site has already been heavily disturbed and bears evidence of past excavation and dumping, and the vegetation is comprised almost exclusively of ruderal species of little value to wildlife and of low likelihood to support listed plants.

   Pepper and locust trees on the north side might provide both nesting and foraging habitat for Cooper's hawk, which is known to nest in urban settings. The California condor has a limited population (approximately 28) in the wild as the majority of birds are being bred in captivity. The nearest released individuals are found in the Los Padres National Forest (USDA 1999). The presence of condors on site is unlikely and would be limited to foraging within the project area.

   Compact soils and a lack of harvester ants greatly reduce the chances of horned lizards occurring on site. Ground disturbance and isolation from known populations make it highly unlikely that mariposa lily or spineflower would occur on site, and none were seen during the site survey. Therefore, because the habitat is of marginal quality for listed or sensitive species, no significant impacts to these species are anticipated.

   Trees on the north edge of the subject property could provide roosting or nesting locations for raptors or migrating birds. Migratory birds, their nests and eggs, are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (U.S.C 16(7)II) and the California Fish and Game Code. Potential raptor or migratory bird nests could be significantly impacted by construction adjacent to trees in this area if this occurs during the nesting season and bird nests are present. Long term cumulative impacts on nesting birds are not considered considerable.

b. **Wetland Habitat**. The site is not located within or adjacent to a wetland. As such, future development would not cause significant impacts.

c. **Coastal Habitat**. The site is not located within the coastal zone. As such, no mitigation would be required for future development.

d. **Migration Corridors**. The subject property is within the Sespe to Santa Monica Mountains corridor which extends down Piru Creek, across the Santa Clara River, and into the Santa Monica Mountains north of Moorpark. However, the parcel is surrounded on three sides by existing development with a citrus grove on the fourth. Therefore, although it is within a mile of the foothills of the Sespes at the mouth of the Piru Creek canyon, it is too isolated and of too small a size to serve as a functional corridor, and animals will alternately be able to utilize larger tracts of contiguous land nearby. Therefore any potential development would not present a significant barrier to migration. No mitigation is necessary.

e. **Locally Important Species/Communities**. There are no locally important species or communities occurring on the site. Therefore, no mitigation would be required.

C. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	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?	☐	☒
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals?	☐	☒
3. Does the project have impacts, which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?	☐	☒

D. MITIGATION MEASURES

Recommended ☒ Required for Negative Declaration ☐

In the event that trees are to be removed during the bird nesting season (February through October), a search for active nests should be conducted prior to construction by a qualified biologist. If active nests are located, then a suitable buffer area dependent on the species involved shall be established from the nest (buffer area may vary between 25-500 feet) and all construction work must be conducted outside the buffer area until the young are no longer dependent upon the nest site.

E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☒ Mitigated Negative Declaration ☐ EIR Required ☐

Reviewer: _____ Date: _____

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March 23, 2005

F. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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