

Hasler
SMM

COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: September 10, 2001
Requestor: Debbie Morrisset
Project: PD 1729 Mod. No. 1
Field Study: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Justification: Earth movement in preparation for the construction of a single family residence within a 2.5-acre parcel and improvements to the associated access road have resulted in unpermitted emplacement of fill within an adjacent unnamed blue-line stream and impacts to oak trees, both of which are located offsite. In addition, preconstruction surveys for rare plants as required by the 1998 Biological Assessment for the site were not conducted prior to site improvements. As a result, a field survey to identify recent and potential impacts to biological resources onsite due to project development was conducted.

A. CHECKLIST

Biological Resources Issues	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	S	U	N	LS	S	U
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 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"/>
c. coastal habitat	<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"/>
d. migration corridors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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

S = Significant effect; MND or EIR required

U = Unknown; EIR required

B. DISCUSSION

The proposed project would develop a single family residence, a detached parking and storage structure, associated infrastructure, and site access within a 2.5-acre parcel (Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 700-0-130-095). This site is located to the northwest of the intersection of Hasler and Wells Roads, between the Little Sycamore Canyon to the west, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to the north, east, and south in southern Ventura County, California. Access to the site would be located at its northeast corner via an easement on two adjacent parcels. The project area is designated Open Space under the Ventura County General Plan and is zoned C-O-S (M), Coastal Open Space-Santa Monica Overlay. Development in the general area is sparse and is primarily scattered single-family residences.

The project site contains a relatively flat graded area in the eastern portion of the site and is surrounded by steep hillsides to the north and west. Elevations onsite range from 1,170 feet in the eastern portion of the site to 1,320 feet in the western portion. Soils onsite are of the Hambright series, (HaG and HbF), and are about 6-19 inches deep above volcanic rock (USDA,

1970). As was described in the 1998 Biological Assessment for the site (Magney, May 1998), the majority of the vegetation onsite consists of native chaparral/coastal sage scrub on the hillsides. In addition, nonnative annual grassland occurs in the flatter, more disturbed areas in the eastern portion of the site. The access to the property crosses an unnamed blue-line stream, which is located to the southeast of the site per the United States Geologic Service Triunfo Pass Quadrangle Map. Southern coast live oak riparian forest is associated with this offsite drainage and occurs in the southeast corner of the parcel. Southern coast live oak riparian forest habitat is considered a Community of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

Project development to date has resulted in several impacts to biological resources onsite and directly offsite and has the potential for additional future effects. Modification of the access road by the property owner has resulted in unpermitted alteration of the unnamed blue-line stream through the deposition of fill. Approximately six live oaks, which are located offsite and associated with the Southern coast live oak riparian forest habitat along this drainage, have been trimmed to improve access to the project site. It should be noted that a condition of the 1998 Biological Assessment required project development to avoid impacts to these oak trees. In addition, it appears that the special-status species preconstruction surveys that were also required in the 1998 Biological Assessment did not occur prior to the initial stages of project development, as noted by the disturbed nature of the flatter areas onsite. The coastal sage scrub/chaparral onsite would be affected by project development and the associated brush clearance zones, which are required to surround onsite structures at a minimum of 100 feet in width.

Locally important species and communities are potentially present onsite due to the location of the project within the Santa Monica Mountains and its proximity to Little Sycamore Canyon to the west and the Santa Monica Mountains to the north, east, and south. A September 2001 search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software identified special-status species that could be potentially present onsite, as they are known within 10 miles of the project area. These include species found in chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland, and riparian areas such as marcescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* spp. *marcescens*), Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*). Southern coast live oak riparian forest habitat is also considered a Community of Special Concern by the CDFG, as noted above.

Of the plant species that may occur onsite, three may be significantly affected by project development: the state and federal endangered Lyon's pentachaeta, and the state rare Santa Susana tarplant and Conejo buckwheat. Lyon's pentachaeta may occur onsite due to the thin volcanic soils present. This species has been documented in the west-central Santa Monica Mountains and western Simi Hills within pocket grasslands that are ecotonal with shrublands and along the edges of trails and roads. Habitat for this species is characterized by a low percentage of total vegetative cover and exposed thin soils that exhibit a microbiotic crust. Santa Susana tarplant is known within chaparral and scrub habitats in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. This species is typically found from 900 to 2,500 feet within sandstone outcrops and



crevices and within scrub and annual grassland habitats. Conejo buckwheat occurs between 150 and 1,900 feet in elevation and on rocky outcrops and cliff faces of Conejo volcanics near annual grassland and scrub areas. Potential impacts to Lyon's pentachaeta, Santa Susana tarplant, and Conejo buckwheat due to project development would be significant, but mitigable.

Nesting raptors, such as the Cooper's hawk, a California Species of Concern, may be present within the adjacent oak woodland in the southeast corner of the site and along the adjacent access road. If present, nesting raptors could be adversely affected by noise and activities associated with project construction. Migratory birds, and 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.

Available habitat present at the site does not appear appropriate for the marcescent dudleya. Given the hilltop location, water resources at the site do not appear adequate to support either the southwestern pond turtle or the two-striped garter snake either onsite or within the ephemeral drainage offsite. While Plummer's mariposa lily and western whiptail may be present, the potential for impacts to the regional population of these species would be less than significant.

The unnamed drainage adjacent to the project site is within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as waters of the U.S. and within the jurisdiction of CDFG as waters of the state. Any disturbance within this drainage requires permitting through the U.S. Corps, CDFG, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB); therefore, project impacts to this drainage through the emplacement of fill and impacts to the associated Southern coast live oak riparian forest habitat require after-the-fact permitting from these agencies. Mitigation to reduce the impacts of past and future activities would normally be required as part of the permit process.

The area is within the coastal zone. The grassland and coastal sage scrub/chapparral present over most of the site are not considered sensitive coastal habitat. Southern coast live oak riparian forest is considered a Community of Special Concern by the CDFG and has been adversely affected by past project development and could be adversely affected by future construction.

The project site could potentially serve as part of a migration corridor between areas within the Point Mugu State Park and Little Sycamore Canyon to the north and west and other open space areas to the north and east within the Santa Monica Mountains. Given the limited development footprint, project development would not significantly impact any existing wildlife corridor.



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 ☒

A rare plant survey for Lyon's pentacheata, Santa Susana tarplant, and Conejo buckwheat and other potential special-status plant species should be conducted in both the spring and summer prior to any further development of the parcel by a qualified biologist for areas onsite where ground disturbance may occur.

In the event, Lyon's pentachaeta, Santa Susana tarplant, or Conejo buckwheat is identified onsite, the current and anticipated future distribution of the species should be mapped by a qualified biologist. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CDFG, and County of Ventura should be formally notified and consulted regarding the presence of this species onsite and the need for a "take" permit under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts. A preservation and management plan should be prepared for the Lyon's pentachaeta, Santa Susana tarplant, and Conejo buckwheat as applicable by a qualified biologist and approved by the County of Ventura, CDFG, and USFWS.

In the event that construction occurs during the raptor nesting season (February through October), a search for active nests must be conducted prior to construction by a qualified biologist. If active nests are located, then all construction work must be conducted at least 500 feet from the nest until the adults and young are no longer dependant upon the nest site.

Prior to further project development, after-the-fact permits should be acquired from the Corps, CDFG, and RWQCB. All requirements of these permits, which are anticipated to include mitigation for impacts to the drainage channel and associated Southern coast live oak riparian forest via revegetation, and the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction, should be implemented. The County of Ventura should receive a copy of such permits prior to allowing any further site grading.



E. DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FROM A BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Negative Declaration ☐

Reviewer:

Date: September 10, 2001

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F. REFERENCES

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California Department of Fish and Game (July 2001b). State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California. 11 pgs. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.

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