

# COUNTY OF VENTURA BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES INITIAL STUDY

Date: June 16, 2003

Requestor: Craig Malin

Project: PD - 1988

Field Study: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Justification: Proposed project area occurs within a previously graded area. Time of year not suitable to determine presence of sensitive plant species for which project may cause a significant CEQA impact.

## 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	<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 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"/>
d. migration corridors	<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"/>
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 concerns development of a portion of a 38.83 acre parcel on Deer Creek Road, approximately two miles from the Pacific Coast Highway. The planned development permit is for construction of a 1,200 square foot single family dwelling, garage and a swimming pool. Outstanding County grading violations exist for this property from 1993 and 2001. These grading violations occurred on the southeast corner of the property and on adjacent National Park Service Land. The proposed development is located within the previously graded areas located on the property. However, a 100 foot fire control buffer zone around the building footprint would not be possible without encroaching onto adjacent National Park Property.

A search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) via the RAREFIND2 software (January 2003) listed several special-status species that could be present within the communities onsite. These are discussed below as applicable to the project location.

USGS topographic maps were reviewed utilizing computer topographic maps (National Geographic, 2001). The onsite elevation ranges from approximately 700 to 1,210 feet above mean sea level, with the highest elevation atop a knoll located on the southeastern side of the property. The property is bisected from north to south by Deer Creek Road, with the majority

of the parcel lying to the west of Deer Park Road, encompassing the upper watershed area of an un-named drainage which flows into the Pacific Ocean, approximately one mile downstream. The property generally slopes upward from this drainage to a ridgeline on the southeast corner of the property just east of Deer Creek Road. The portion of the property proposed for development, lies within the southeast corner on the ridge line just east of Deer Creek Road. The Santa Monica Mountains National Park lies adjacent to the property to the east. Areas of the property west of Deer Creek Road are undeveloped and appear to contain native habitats, as observed in aerial photos (2003 Globexplorer, AirPhotoUSA). The portion of the property southeast of Deer Creek Road contains an access road, graded areas, and some coastal scrub/chaparral habitat.

As observed in aerial photos and from experience on projects in the area, the native habitats on site likely consist primarily of mixed chaparral and coastal sage scrub. These habitat types generally consist of plant species including chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), black sage (*Salvia melifera*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* and *E. cinereum*), and laurel sumac (*Rhus laurina*). Associated species often include toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), white and purple sage (*Salvia apiana* and *S. leucophylla*), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*), and gooseberry (*Ribes* sp.). These habitats cover the entire property with the exception of riparian habitat, located in the un-named drainage in the center of the property, the right-of-way for Deer Creek Road, and previously graded areas in the southeast corner of the property. Additionally, it is probable that some coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) are located on the property and associated with the drainage area, as is commonly found with drainages in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The CNDDDB record search located 3 wildlife species and 7 plant species. The search area incorporated a large diversity of habitats and conditions (the USGS Triunfo Pass Quadrangle). Additionally, some species without records on the CNDDDB have the potential to occur within habitats on the site and are also included below.

Special-status wildlife species that have the potential to occur on the property include:

- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), a wide ranging species found in mountains, foothills, and adjacent grasslands. A State species of concern.
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), a wide ranging species found in open grasslands, sagebrush flats, and foothill areas. A State species of concern.
- Coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), found in deserts, semi-arid areas, and in woodland and riparian habitats. A Federal species of concern.
- San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*), found in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. A State species of concern.
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), occurs in coastal scrub and rocky outcrops. A State species of concern.

Nine special-status plant species have the potential to occur within habitats on the site, and include:

- 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.
- Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), a deciduous shrub species that occurs in chaparral and rocky coastal scrub habitats. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from July to November.
- Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp *agourensis*), a perennial herb found in chaparral cismontane woodland/ volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from May to June.
- Marescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp *marcescens*), a perennial herb found in chaparral/ volcanic habitats. This plant is a Federal threatened, a State rare, and a CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to June.
- Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), a perennial herb that is found in chaparral, coastal scrub, and valley/ foothill grasslands. A State Rare and CNPS List 1B species that blooms from April to July.
- 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.

In addition mature oak trees that occur on the project site are considered a locally important species by Ventura County.

#### Biological resources issues:

- Endangered, threatened or rare species.** Grading conducted in the past may have resulted in the loss or disturbance to State and/or federally listed species, including Santa Susana tarplant, Conejo buckwheat, and the dudleyas listed above, or the habitat supporting these plant species. The loss of these species or their habitat would be considered significant. Currently, the proposed development would occur within the footprint of previously graded areas and as such would likely have no impacts to existing populations of State and/or federally listed plant species. However, native habitats with the potential for Santa Susana tarplant and Conejo buckwheat may occur in areas adjacent to the project footprint that would require clearing for fire control. These potential impacts would require mitigation.

Although there is the potential for the San Diego horned lizard, western whiptail golden eagle, ferruginous hawk, and rufous-crowned sparrow to occur onsite, none of these species are listed as endangered, threatened, or rare. The loss of less than 10 acres of habitat would not have significantly impacted these species, namely, it would not substantially reduce population size due to loss of individuals or limit the known range of these species. No mitigation would be required.

- Wetland Habitat.** Wetland habitat may occur on the site within the drainage riparian areas located west of Deer Creek Road. Previous grading actions and proposed development within the southeast corner of the property have little potential to affect these areas, due to the distances and buffer areas of Deer Creek Road and native upland habitats. Under Ventura County guidelines no significant impacts to wetlands would have occurred or are likely to occur and no mitigation is required.

- c. **Coastal Habitat.** Environmentally sensitive habitats listed within the Ventura County Coastal Area Plan (January, 2002) include a designation for creek corridors found within the coastal zone on the South Coast. The previously graded areas and proposed development are located greater than 100 feet from this resource, and as such, no project impacts would occur to environmentally sensitive habitats and no mitigation is required.
- d. **Migration Corridors.** The property and surrounding areas are primarily undeveloped open space with native habitats. Species passing through the project site may be partially blocked by development, but will alternately be able to utilize other areas of the site and adjacent open land for passage. Therefore, the previous grading and proposed project will not be a significant barrier to migration and project impacts to migration corridors are considered less than significant. The project would not contribute to cumulative impacts on migration corridors and no mitigation is required.
- e. **Locally important Species/Communities.** Oak trees are an environmentally important species within Ventura County. Any oak trees on the property should be protected in accordance with the Ventura County Oak tree protection ordinance. It is unlikely that oak trees are located in the southeastern corner of the project site as they are normally associated with drainage areas, and accordingly, it is unlikely that impacts occurred to oak trees due to previous grading actions. Additionally, special status species including CNPS listed plants and state or federal species of concern are considered as a locally important species. CNPS List 1 plants have the potential to occur within habitats on the project area, and mitigation would be required.

### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>