SECTION B
INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

Job: PMW-1054 and PMW-1055 **Requester:** Debbie Morrisset

Applicant: Simi Starlight LCC "Parker Ranch" **Date:** November 4, 2000

Survey Type: Field **Rationale:** Large lot subdivision

Site Description: A field visit of the project site (County Parcels 685-0-050-065; 646-0-170-095 and City Parcels 644-0-140-055 and 651-0-020-075) was conducted on November 4, 2000. The 416 acre area is located south of the Southern Pacific Railroad and about 3/4 mile west and northwest of Knolls School in Simi Valley. The topography is hilly with steep slopes and canyons and about a 650 ft. difference in elevation. The majority of the property is vegetated with dense chaparral, including scattered coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), California lilac (*Ceanothus oliganthus*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), buckbrush (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), and sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*). Along the ridges are large sandstone boulders and areas of oak woodland. The northern portion of the property, with gentler slopes, grades northward from a coastal sage scrub with California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*) to an oak savannah with coast live oak and Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) and an understory of non-native grass/mustard.

	Project Impact Degree of Effect*				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect*			
	N	LS	PS-M	PS	N	LS	PS-M	PS
6. Biological Resources								
a. endangered, threatened or rare species	___	___	X	___	___	___	X	___
b. wetland habitat	X	___	___	___	X	___	___	___
c. coastal habitat	X	___	___	___	X	___	___	___
d. migration corridors	X	___	___	___	X	___	___	___
e. Locally important species/communities	X	___	___	___	X	___	___	___

*N No impact
LS Less than significant
PS-M Potentially significant, unless mitigated to a level of insignificance
PS Potentially significant, even after mitigation

SECTION C
DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

a. Several rare or endangered species have been reported within 5 miles of the project site and could likely be present at the site. The western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondii*) has been observed west of Black Canyon and south of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. The toad requires vernal pools for breeding and egg-laying. The northern area of the project site would have a suitable habitat for the toad. The western spadefoot occurs primarily in grassland habitats, and the oak savannah at the north end is a possible habitat.

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) has been sighted in Upper Dry Canyon, north of the project site. The burrowing owl is found in low-growing vegetation, typical of that found on the northern portion of the project site. The owl requires burrowing mammals for food, usually the California ground squirrel. Farther south, the vegetation is more dense with thicker chaparral and would not be as likely a habitat.

Found within a few miles of the project site, in the Rocky Peak area, is the San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*). The woodrat habitat is a dense chaparral with chamise, scrub oak, laurel sumac, black sage, and California sagebrush. The woodrat is particularly abundant in rock outcrops and rocky cliffs and slopes. The southern portion of the property with chaparral covered slopes and sandstone boulders would be a suitable habitat for the San Diego woodrat.

The Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), a federal species of concern, has been observed within a few miles of the project site, in the hills of eastern Simi Valley. The Santa Susana tarplant grows in crevices of sandstone boulders and around rocky sandstone outcrops. Associated species include wild buckwheat, chamise, purple sage, California sagebrush, toyon, and bush monkey flower. The presence of Santa Susana tarplant on the project site is likely. Numerous large sandstone boulders and rock outcrops were observed on the ridge tops at the southern portion of the property. The vegetation is also the type that would be expected where the tarplant is growing, including chamise, purple sage, wild buckwheat, California sagebrush and bush monkey flower.

Chorizanthe parryi var. fernandina, the San Fernando Valley spineflower, a federal candidate for endangered status, has recently been observed at Ahmanson Ranch (1999 and 2000). It had previously been thought to be extinct. The habitat of the spineflower is on sandy soil of coastal sage scrub. It is possible that the San Fernando Valley spineflower does occur on the project site. The most likely area would be closer to the northern border of the property where the vegetation is a more scrub type rather than the dense chaparral of the southern portion. To determine if it is present, a survey would need to be conducted during the months of May or June.

The federal endangered plant, *Dodecahema leptoceras* (Slender-horned spineflower), had been observed within 5 miles of the project site. However, it may now be extirpated. It is found in alluvial fan sage scrub, in flood deposited terraces and washes, associated with, *Encelia, Dalea,* and *Lepidospartum.* No such habitat occurs on the project site, so the presence of the slender-horned spineflower would not be expected.

Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), a federal species of concern, has been observed within a few miles of the project site, in the Santa Susana Pass area. The lily is usually found in coastal sage scrub or valley and foothill grassland. Soil is usually sandy or alluvial. The habitat of the northern portion of the project site could be suitable for the presence of Plummer's mariposa lily. A survey at the

time of blooming, usually late May and June, would be necessary to determine its presence.

b. There is no wetland habitat on the project site, so there should be no disturbance of such a site.
c. The project site is not near the coast, so no impact on a coastal habitat should occur.

d. The project site is likely a migration corridor for many animals. However, the subdivision of the larger parcel should not affect the migration pattern. If development is to occur on the property, then further evaluation might be necessary.

e. At the northern portion of the property is an oak savannah with coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*,) with a non-native grass/mustard understory. Also, in the southern area of the property, along the ridges, are areas of oak woodland with *Quercus agrifolia*, interspersed laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*).

Several other locally important plant communities have been reported within 5 miles of the project site. A coast live oak riparian forest has been observed in Las Llajas Canyon, a tributary to Tapo Canyon, about 2 miles east of the property. Also observed in the same canyon is a southern mixed riparian forest with sycamore, cottonwood, coast live oak, and willow. No riparian habitat occurs in the parcel to be subdivided, so no impact on these two communities would be expected.

A cismontane alkali marsh has also been observed along a tributary of Tapo Canyon, with such species as *Distichlis spicata, Juncus mexicanus, Apium graveolens*, and *Xanthium strumarium.* No such alkali marsh is present on the project site, so there should be no impact on this community.
Finally, a southern willow scrub with dense willow, and scattered cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) has been observed in the vicinity of Tapo Canyon. The habitat is a deeply incised channel with a silt loam substrate. No such habitat is present on the project site, so there will be no impact on this community.

SECTION D
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:	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, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	___	X
2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time while long-term impacts will endure well into the future).	___	X
3. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (Several projects may have relatively small individual impacts on two or more resources, but the total of those impacts on the environment is significant).	___	X
4. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	___	X

SECTION E
DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☒ I find the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measure(s) described below will be applied to the project. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

☐ I find the proposed project, individually and/or cumulatively MAY have a significant effect on the environment and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

Mitigation Measures

Although there are no plans to develop the parcels at this time, should future development be planned, then an environmental study should be carried out to determine if the western spadefoot (*Scaphiopus hammondii*), the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), the San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*), the Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*), Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) or the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi var fernandina*) are present and would be impacted. In addition, care should be taken to prevent impacting the oak savannah or the oak woodland that is present on the property.

William Lehman & Barbara Collins — 7 Nov '00

Signature of Preparer — Date