

Ventura County Planning Division

Standards for Initial Study Biological Assessments

October 9, 2012

The standards outlined herein are designed to:

1. Ensure the quality, accuracy and completeness of biological assessment reports prepared to determine potential project impacts, per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
2. Aid in staff's efficient and consistent review of documents and associated maps from different consultants.
3. Provide adequate information to make appropriate planning decisions and to make determinations regarding conformance with applicable regulations.
4. Increase the efficiency of the environmental review process and avoid unnecessary delays.

These standards must be adhered to for the preparation of Initial Study Biological Assessments for the Ventura County Planning Division pursuant to CEQA Section 15064 (Determining Significant Impacts). **The Ventura County Planning Division reserves the right to reject any report submitted that does not meet the standards, content and format requirements outlined herein.**

The Initial Study Biological Assessment (ISBA) must thoroughly report on the biological resources present on a project site. The information contained in an ISBA must be sufficient to make a determination about whether impacts are significant and whether impacts can be mitigated to a level of less than significant through a Mitigated Negative Declaration or whether an EIR is necessary. When there is potential for listed endangered or threatened species to occur or where wetland delineation is required to determine the extent of wetland habitat, additional study may be needed to make CEQA findings. In these cases the ISBA may be considered incomplete until the additional surveys or analysis is performed.

Database Structure

It is the County's desire to use data from biology reports for resource mapping purposes. Therefore, the report format reflects the ideal organization for capturing mapped data and associated attributes. The organization and format of the questions asked in this ISBA template reflect the high level of detail and specificity required to compile data consistently in a biological database. If the question asks, for example, for a "High, Medium or Low" response, please do your best to choose from those three choices. Each section of the report offers a "Comments" section wherein answers can be qualified or further explained if necessary.

Report Template & Instructions

It is understood and expected that the overall length of ISBAs and the amount of information included will vary depending on the size and scope of the project, the regional setting, the biological resources present and the degree of impacts proposed. Nonetheless, all reports must use the template on the following pages, beginning with the report cover page.

The template has a simple color-coded system:

Blue text: The instructions for completing the report are found within the template document in blue type. Blue type sometimes also represents example information. **All blue text should be deleted from the final report.**

Black text: Headings and information that should be included in the final document are in black type. This text should only be deleted if it does not apply to a given project. The template may not cover everything needed in every report, so it is acceptable to add tables or report sections that may be needed on a case-by-case basis.

Maps

The following section explains the maps that are required as part of the ISBA report. Most importantly, maps must show the proposed construction footprint overlaid on the biological resource maps. The Planning Division prefers maps created with GIS. However, if biological consultants do not have access to GIS software, some maps can be ordered from Ventura County’s Resource Management Agency (RMA) – GIS staff for a fee. The Biological Resources Map Packet Request Form can be accessed through the Planning Division’s website, and the content of these maps is explained below under County Biological Resources Map Packet. Site plans can be submitted to RMA-GIS staff to be overlaid on the County’s biological resource maps.

Because the County’s biological resource maps are coarse and not comprehensively ground-truthed, corrections or additions may need to be made following biological surveys. This can be accomplished using GIS, in which case maps can be placed in the report or attached as pdf files. If hand-drawn maps will be provided with the report, the biologist’s field observations should be noted on the 11"x17" hard copy map packet maps and returned to the County with the report. All mapped resources must be easily identifiable.

Map Scale

Maps should use a maximum scale of 1" = 250' (1" shall equal no more than 250'). If the survey area size is too large to fit on 11"x17" paper at this scale, or if the quantity of information on the map renders it illegible or overly complex, then multiple 11"x17" sheets should be used.

Maps Required for all ISBAs

Project Location Map that illustrates where in Ventura County the project is located, which includes:

Project Location Map Features	Map Key*
Parcel Boundaries for the Project Site Parcels	
Base Map that includes:	
Major Roads	
Cities	
Rivers and Streams	
USGS Topographic Map or Current Aerial Imagery	

Site and Survey Map, which includes:

Site and Survey Map Features	Map Key*
Construction Footprint:	
Proposed building pads/project site(s) (including staging/storage areas)	
Existing lot lines/proposed lot lines	
Fire hazard brush clearance areas (including off-site)	
Proposed roads/road improvements (including required offsite road improvements)	
Existing graded areas	
Proposed grading areas	
Other info (violation areas not captured elsewhere, etc.)	O
Easements (utility, conservation, etc.)	
Biological Survey Area boundaries	SA
Inaccessible areas	
Photo locations	P
Impact areas (impacts not covered elsewhere, such as runoff, lighting, indirect)	IA

Plant Communities Map, which includes:

Plant Communities Map Features	Map Key*
Plant communities	PC
Physical features	PF
Construction footprint	
Biological Survey Area boundaries	SA

Waters and Wetlands Map (only if waters/wetlands exist), which includes:

Waters and Wetlands Map Features	Map Key*
Water/Wetland boundary	W
Recommended water/wetland buffers	WB
Construction footprint	
Biological Survey Area boundaries	SA

Species Map (only if species observed or have potential to exist), which includes:

Species Map Features	Map Key*
Special status species observed	SSO
Special status species potential	SSP
Construction footprint	
Biological Survey Area boundaries	SA

Habitat Connectivity Map (only if connectivity features, crossing structures, or barriers exist), which includes:

Habitat Connectivity Map Features	Map Key*
Connectivity features	C
Crossing structures	CS
Barriers	B
Construction footprint	
Biological Survey Area boundaries	SA

Mitigation Map (if there is a known location for on-site or off-site mitigation), which includes:

Mitigation Features	Map Key*
Mitigation measure locations (If data is adequate from ISBA, and the measure is mapable. Includes on-site or off-site restoration/conservation areas and/or restrictive covenant areas.)	MM

* Map Key: The map key is a unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. For example, the Observed Special Status Species map keys start with “SSO” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., SSO1, SSO2. Map keys help associate information in the report with mapped data. Where no map key is indicated above, map symbols are sufficient.

County Biological Resources Map Packet

The County maintains a spatial database on biological resources in the County. Five different maps are used to convey these data, which should be consulted as part of a project’s biological assessment. **Be advised that some of the County’s mapped data are coarse.** These maps should be viewed only as a starting point; they will be continually refined as biological surveys, such as ISBAs, provide more detailed information.

County Biological Resources Map Packet	
Aerial Base Map	The County’s aerial imagery is at 12” resolution. This map can be ordered with the project plans overlaid on the imagery.
Vegetation on Aerial Base Map	This map is a mosaic vegetation map made by combining, and crosswalking, a number of plant community data sources (both coarse and fine scale). The data is mostly quite coarse, except for in the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills area, and is only meant to offer a starting point.
Waterbodies (buffered) on Aerial Base Map	This map combines 9 different sources of data on wetlands and waterbodies in the County, and adds a “must assess impacts within” buffer of 300’ in the non-coastal zone and 500’ in the coastal zone, in compliance with the County’s General Plan. The purpose of the map is to determine whether a project’s construction footprint is within this buffer.
Wetlands	This is National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data. Most quads within the County, but not all, are covered. The Cowardin system is used to classify wetlands. Some riparian areas are also mapped. The NWI Maps do not show all wetlands or riparian areas since the maps are derived from aerial photointerpretation with limitations due to scale, photo quality, inventory techniques, and other factors. NWI maps are mapped at a 1:24,000 scale; consequently, the maps only show wetlands that are readily photointerpreted at a more coarse scale. Although these data are quite good, their limitations should be understood; they should in no way be considered complete. For more information on the Cowardin classification system, go to: http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/wetlands/classwet/index.htm .
Regional Wildlife Corridors on Aerial Base Map	The Regional Wildlife Corridors layer identifies the location of major landscape linkages and was provided by the South Coast Missing Linkages Project. These linkages are used by flora and fauna, primarily large animals , to travel between habitats. This map is not comprehensive or complete. Habitat connectivity is also important for smaller animals at smaller scales; streams and agricultural areas are also often important for movement. These other important connectivity features are not included on this map but should be considered during the field survey.

These biological resource maps (hard copy or pdf) can be acquired from the County by the biologist for use in field surveys. A form for ordering the Biological Resources Map Packet can be found on the Planning Division’s website at: http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html.

The biologist may use his/her professional judgment as to whether the complete map set is needed. In all cases an aerial base map is required. Hard copy maps are provided in 11"x17" format at a minimum scale of 1" = 250' (1" shall equal no more than 250'). If the project size, or the estimated survey area size, is too large to fit on 11"x17" paper at this scale, then a choice is offered to receive multiple 11"x17" sheets or larger-format paper.

BIOS

In addition to the map packet provided by the County, the biologist should also research data available on BIOS, the California Department of Fish and Game’s (CDFG) online biological spatial data server. Multiple County maps, including zoning, wetlands, and habitat connectivity, and links to other biological studies conducted in the County, are available on the Ventura County viewer of BIOS (Go to <http://bios.dfg.ca.gov/>, and click on Public BIOS Data Viewer; once loaded, click on the blue pushpin and select the Ventura County datasets to view the Ventura County maps).

Consultation with Resource Agencies

The Planning Division encourages early consultation with federal and state resource agencies when resources under their jurisdiction may be affected by a project. These resources include federal and state listed threatened and endangered species as well as waters and wetlands under jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game, or Regional Water Quality Control Board. Because this Initial Study Biological Assessment will often also serve as the biological

assessment for other required permits from these various agencies, impacts to resources under their jurisdiction must be addressed in this report.

Photos

Color photos of the site, taken at the time the field survey was conducted, clearly indicating the existing condition of the land and land uses, must be included with all ISBAs. Include a reasonable number of photos to adequately characterize the site, especially the proposed development area.

The location of the site, as well as the position from which the photo was taken, must be labeled on the photo and photo locations must be keyed to the Site and Survey Map. Prints must be formatted no more than two images per 8.5" x 11" page.

ISBA Report Submittal

One hard copy and an electronic version (PDF) of the ISBA report must be submitted to the Discretionary Permit Coordinator (Winston Wright, winston.wright@ventura.org, 805/654-2468), concurrently with discretionary permit application. Review of the ISBA report will be conducted by the Planning Division staff biologist or a Division-contracted biological consultant to ensure consistency with Division standards. If the Planning Division finds inconsistencies or requests further study, comments will be provided to the applicant and his/her qualified biologist, and a revised ISBA report will be required.

Note that the Planning Division requires that consultant-prepared reports be duplexed (except maps and photo pages) and submitted on recycled-content paper.

Initial Study Biological Assessment

Cover Page

Original ISBA report date:

Revision report date(s): [\(delete if first version\)](#)

Case number (to be entered by Planning Div.):

Permit type:

Applicant:

Case Planner (to be entered by Planning Div.):

Total parcel(s) size [\(acres\)](#):

Assessor Parcel Number(s):

Development proposal description:

[\(The items above will be provided by case planner if an application has been submitted to the Planning Division.\)](#)

Prepared for Ventura County Planning Division by:

As a Qualified Biologist, approved by the Ventura County Planning Division, I hereby certify that this Initial Study Biological Assessment was prepared according to the Planning Division's requirements and that the statements furnished in the report and associated maps are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Qualified Biologist (signature):		Date:
Name (printed):	Title:	Company:
Phone:	email:	
Other Biologist (signature): Complete this section for each additional biologist who assisted with the Biological Assessment		Date:
Name (printed):	Title:	Company:
Phone:	email:	
Role: Specify if biologist conducted field work, mapped data, assisted in the report writing, etc.		

[Add additional signature blocks as needed.](#)

Initial Study Checklist

Include one of the two statements below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

This Biological Assessment DID NOT provide adequate information to make CEQA findings regarding potentially significant impacts or to develop mitigation measures necessary to mitigate potentially significant project and cumulative impacts.

DO NOT complete the level of significance checklist table below if the above is true.

Additional biology-related information, studies, or outside agency permits needed to make CEQA findings, develop mitigation measures or to satisfy other regulator agencies:

Discuss here how this Biological Assessment did not provide adequate information to make CEQA findings regarding potentially significant impacts or to develop measures to mitigate any potentially significant impacts. List the additional data needed in order to make such findings, such as:

- Botanical surveys
- Wildlife surveys

Include any important time schedules for the above.

This Biological Assessment DID provide adequate information to make recommended CEQA findings regarding potentially significant impacts.

Complete the level of significance checklist table below ONLY IF the above is true. Check the appropriate box for impacts on Biological Resources overall. In addition, note the level of significance for each of the three categories: Species, Ecological Communities, and Habitat Connectivity.

Note: The Planning Division, as the lead agency, will make the final CEQA findings regarding potentially significant impacts and mitigation measures. However, recommended CEQA findings and mitigation measures from the applicant’s biological consultant are helpful and will be considered during the Planning Division’s review of project impacts.

	Project Impact Degree of Effect				Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect			
	N	LS	PS-M*	PS	N	LS	PS-M*	PS
Biological Resources								
Species								
Ecological Communities								
Habitat Connectivity								

N: No impact

LS: Less than significant impact

PS-M: Potentially significant unless mitigation incorporated.

PS: Potentially significant

* DO NOT check this box unless the Biological Assessment provided information adequate enough to develop mitigation measures that reduce the level of impact to less than significant.

Contents

The required sections of the Initial Study Assessment Report are provided below. The Contents must follow this order and format. The Report Cover/Signature Page and the Initial Study Checklist page precede the Table of Contents.

- Summary**
- Section 1: Construction Footprint Description**.....
- Section 2: Survey Area Description and Methodology**
- 2.1 Survey Purpose.....
- 2.2 Survey Area Description.....
- 2.3 Methodology
- Section 3: The Biological Inventory**
- 3.1 Ecological Communities
- 3.2 Species
- 3.3 Wildlife Movement and Connectivity.....
- Section 4: Impact Assessment**
- 4.1 Sufficiency of Biological Data
- 4.2 Impacts and Mitigation
- Section 5: Photos**
- Appendix 1: Summary of Biological Resource Regulations**.....
- Appendix 2: Observed Species Tables**

Maps

- Project Location Map ([mandatory](#))
- Site and Survey ([mandatory](#))
- [Plant Communities](#).....
- [Species](#).....
- [Waters and Wetlands](#).....
- [Habitat Connectivity](#)
- [Mitigation Map](#)

(The preceding 5 maps are contingent, depending on the project's biological resources).

Attachments

List each document attached to the report. The following documents must be attached:

- A. List of California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB)-tracked species with recorded occurrences within at least a 10-mile radius of the project site.
- B. Attach copies of all CNDDDB California Native Species Field Survey Forms and California Natural Community Field Survey Forms sent to the California Department of Fish and Game to document observations of special status species or communities found on the project site.

Summary

The summary will incorporate the findings of the report; no new information should be provided. The length of the summary depends directly on the nature and complexity of the biological resources within the survey area. For projects with little to no biological resources affected by the project, the summary should be quite brief. The purpose of the summary is to provide a quick reference for the public and decision makers. Therefore, the language should be less technical than that used in the remainder of the document.

Section 1: Construction Footprint Description

Construction Footprint Definition (per the Ventura County Planning Division): The construction footprint includes the proposed maximum limits of temporary or permanent direct land or vegetation disturbance for a project including such things as the building pad(s), roads/road improvements, grading, septic systems, wells, drainage improvements, fire hazard brush clearance area(s), tennis courts, pools/spas, landscaping, storage/stockpile areas, construction staging areas, fire department turnarounds, utility trenching and other grading areas. The construction footprint on some types of projects, such as mining, oil and gas exploration or agricultural operations, may be quite different than the above.

Development Proposal Description:

Expand the description from the cover sheet here. Describe the whole of the project, not just the immediate action being pursued. For example, a Tentative Map or Tentative Parcel Map proposes to subdivide property; the project in question is not just the increase in the number of lots, but the ultimate outcome of residential or commercial development. Another example is an application for a grading permit. The project is not just the immediate grading, but also the end result for which the land will be graded. Describe all physical alterations that will occur to the existing site as a result of the project. Describe all proposed structures, their approximate size, location and purpose.

If the project is a subdivision or lot legalization, where no specific development of structures is concurrently proposed, then consult with Planning Division staff to identify the construction footprint, indirect impact area, and survey area. Refer to the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines, Part E, Step 1 for information on how to define the impact area.

Remember, this discussion focuses on what is to be built or altered. A description of the environment is captured below in "Survey Area Environmental Setting."

Construction Footprint Size

State the size of the area proposed for development, including such things as the building pad, fire hazard brush clearance areas, roads, and fire department turnaround areas. An estimate of construction footprint size is acceptable. NOTE: the construction footprint size will be smaller than the survey area size because it does not take into account areas of potential indirect impacts.

Development Area Size (construction footprint size without driveway and brush clearance area)

Include this section only in the coastal zone.

The development area size is especially important to know when projects are located in the coastal zone within ESHA. The Coastal Commission allows a minimum area for development on ESHA lands (generally 10,000 sf), in order to allow property owners the economic use of their land. In their calculation, this minimum area excludes the driveway and the fire brush clearance areas (although these are still considered impacts which must be mitigated).

Square Feet	Feature
	Total

Indicate the various elements within the development area in the table above.

Project Design for Impact Avoidance or Minimization

Discuss here any known design or redesign efforts already taken by the applicant, prior to this biological assessment, to avoid or minimize impacts to biological resources. Include recommendations made for redesign to avoid impacts that were rejected by the applicant. Your recommendations on avoidance or minimization come later in the report in the “Impacts Assessment” section. The purpose of this question is just to document, in this section that describes “the project,” any known avoidance or minimization measures already taken.

Coastal Zone/Overlay Zones

Include all that apply. Zoning can be found through Ventura County’s “What’s My Zoning” website: <http://maps.countyofventura.org/website/zoninglookup.htm>.

Coastal Zone (Zoning designation shows a “C” prefix, Ex: “COS” means coastal open space)

Scenic Resources Protection Overlay Zone (/SRP)

Mineral Resources Protection Overlay Zone (/MRP)

Scenic Highway Protection Overlay Zone (/SHP)

Community Business District Overlay Zone (/CBD)

Zoning

Provide the zoning. Zoning can be found through Ventura County’s “What’s My Zoning” website: <http://maps.countyofventura.org/website/zoninglookup.htm>. For more information on zoning designations, see the Coastal and Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinances on the Planning Division’s website: <http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/>

Elevation

An elevation range can be provided when the site has significantly variable elevations.

Other

Describe other important features of the construction footprint such as the location of utility easements or other requirements for access.

Section 2: Survey Information

2.1 Survey Purpose

Discretionary actions undertaken by public agencies are required to demonstrate compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of this Initial Study Biological Assessment (ISBA) is to gather enough information about the biological resources associated with the proposed project, and their potential to be impacted by the project, to make a CEQA Initial Study significance finding for biological resources. In general, ISBA’s are intended to:

- Provide an inventory of the biological resources on a project site and the values of those resources.
- Determine if a proposed project has the potential to impact any significant biological resources.

- Recommend project redesign to avoid, minimize or reduce impacts to significant biological resources.
- Recommend additional studies necessary to adequately assess potential impacts and/or to develop adequate mitigation measures.
- Develop mitigation measures, when necessary, in cases where adequate information is available.

The above is a generic “Purpose” explanation. This can be modified or added to in order to address any other details about the specific survey.

2.2 Survey Area Description

Survey Area Definition (per the Ventura County Planning Division): The physical area a biologist evaluates as part of a biological assessment. This includes all areas that could potentially be subject to direct or indirect impacts from the project, including, but not limited to: the construction footprint; areas that would be subject to noise, light, dust or runoff generated by the project; any required buffer areas (e.g., buffers surrounding wetland habitat). The construction footprint plus a 100 to 300-foot buffer—beyond the required fire hazard brush clearance boundary—(or 20-foot from the cut/fill boundary or road fire hazard brush clearance boundary – whichever is greater) is generally the size of a survey area. Required off-site improvements—such as roads or fire hazard brush clearance—are included in the survey area. Survey areas can extend off the project’s parcel(s) because indirect impacts may cross property lines. The extent of the survey area shall be determined by the biologist in consultation with the lead agency.

A preliminary survey area should be outlined prior to the field visit, but once in the field, the boundaries may need to be modified to reflect the resources and conditions onsite.

For large properties with small construction footprints, or for land subdivisions, the survey area may be limited to the construction footprint or identified buildable site plus a buffer, or the entire property may require a biological survey. Refer to the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines, Part E, Step 1 for information on how to define the impact area and survey area. **This determination must be made in consultation with the Planning Division prior to conducting the survey.**

Survey Area 1 (SA1)

Describe the survey area(s) below. **Some projects will have more than one survey area (polygon) if the survey areas are separated by unsurveyed areas.** For mapping purposes, the information below must be completed separately for each survey area. Repeat this entire section for each distinct survey area and number them sequentially using the map key (SA1, SA2, etc.). Plot each survey area on the Site and Survey Map using the map key.

Location

Briefly describe the survey area location in the regional and local context, and relative to major roads, cities or other landmarks. Briefly describe the boundaries of the survey area(s), with reference to on-site features as well as to the project’s parcel(s) (e.g., are the survey area boundaries different from the parcel boundaries? why?). Specify whether the survey area boundary was flagged (not required).

Survey Area Environmental Setting

Briefly describe the physical characteristics such as topography, drainage patterns and wetlands. Describe the existing land uses, including the type and density of development and infrastructure, as well as unauthorized activities or other disturbances (both natural and man-made) within the survey area. Generally describe the area’s habitats. Describe any other unusual features. (This is not a conclusion – just a brief overview of the setting.)

Surrounding Area Environmental Setting

Briefly describe the physical characteristics and land uses, habitats and/or disturbances adjacent to the survey area (not the parcel, which could be much larger). Identify any protected land in the vicinity of the survey area. Describe any other important aspects of the landscape or regional context.

Cover

Provide a rough estimate of the cover of the survey area using the categories below. Additional categories can be used if appropriate for a given project.

% native vegetation

% non-native vegetation

% recently burned

% ag/grazing

% bare ground/cleared/graded

% buildings, paved roads and other impervious cover

% other

Insert Project Location Map here

Insert Site and Survey Map here

2.3 Methodology

References

Cite all reference documents and sources of information used in the assessment, including any relevant past biological reports or surveys conducted on or near the project.

The following should usually be included on the list:

- California Department of Fish and Game, BIOS. (*date you accessed it*). BIOS is an internet-based biological data map server. This database was searched to identify other projects that have occurred in the vicinity of the subject property.
- Ventura County Planning Division, GIS Biology Map Packet (date prepared by RMA-GIS for the project). Consists of mapped resource information for the project site, including: wetlands and waterbodies; wildlife corridors/connectivity areas; vegetation; and high resolution aerial imagery.
- Vegetation Classification of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Environs in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties, California. Presented to National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Agency. California Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch and California Native Plant Society. January 2006.
- USGS-NPS Vegetation Mapping Program, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Photo Interpretation Report. May 23, 2007.

- California Department of Fish and Game, Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, List of Vegetation Alliances and Associations. September 2010.
http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/vegcamp/natural_comm_list.asp
- CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants database, v7-08a 2-01-08,
http://cnps.web.aplus.net/cgi-bin/inv/inventory.cgi/Html?item=checkbox_9.htm#q9

Survey Details Table

Field surveys must be performed in the appropriate season when the most critical resources can best be identified and evaluated. Some survey times are mandated per protocols established by state and federal agencies for certain species. Surveys must result in full coverage of the survey area unless access is restricted. Planning Division staff may request an additional survey if the time spent in the field does not appear adequate to have recorded all resources or the results of the survey would have been significantly affected by season, time of day or weather conditions.

Describe survey details and methodology information below. **Some projects will involve more than one survey.** Complete a new record (row) for each survey area visit. Include here only those new surveys conducted specifically for this report. If other past surveys are being used as part of the analysis, cite those surveys/reports in the References section above.

Survey Date & Details							
Survey Key (1)	Survey Date (2)	Survey Area Map Key(s) (3)	Survey Type (4)	Time Period (5)	Methods/Constraints (6)	GPS (7)	Surveyors
SD1	6/20/2007	SA1	ISBA	9:00 am–10:30 am	Walking transects. The entire site was accessible.	Garmin, model X, submeter	Ima Biologist
ISBA Initial Study Biological Assessment Botanical..... Botanical Survey							

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Survey key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying individual survey events. Survey Date & Details records are **not mapped**, they are associated (in the Species Table) with the mapped observations of special status species. Survey Date & Details keys start with “SD” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “SD1, SD2.”

2) Survey date:

Use the following date format: 4/14/2007

Surveys performed on the same date but at substantially different times should be counted as separate surveys. Format multiple visits on the same day as follows: 4/14/2007 – 2.

3) Survey area map key:

Indicate the survey areas, using the map key(s) (e.g. SA2 or SA1 & SA2), for which the survey details information applies. For example, if there were two survey areas that were visited on different days, each visit would constitute a separate record in the above table.

4) Survey type:

Indicate whether the survey was for an ISBA, Botanical or another type of survey.

5) Time period spent on the site:

Use the format shown in this example: 9:00 am–10:30 a.m.

6) Methods/Constraints:

Briefly describe the methods you used to collect information (e.g. transects), any survey limitations or constraints (such as timing, the season, high winds, etc.), and discuss the areas of the site

actually visited and not visited and why (such as too steep, fenced, etc.). Discuss different methods used for different issue areas (vegetation vs. wetland, etc.).

7) GPS:

If GPS was used, indicate the make and model and unit accuracy. If you are not using ArcPad software to directly input your data into a GIS, collect the locations in decimal degree seconds. If you are using ArcPad, adhere to County GIS standards (coordinate system: State Plane, California V, NAD 1927, Lambert Conformal Conic projection).

Section 3: The Biological Inventory

See Appendix One for an overview of the types of biological resources that are protected in Ventura County.

3.1 Ecological Communities: Plant Communities, Physical Features and Wetland

Background Research

Before conducting the field visit, background research should be conducted to identify expected rare or locally important plant communities, USFWS mapped critical habitat and any mapped wetlands or streams. In most cases, information within a 5- to 10-mile radius from the survey area should be considered.

Plant Communities

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

Locally important or rare plant communities were not found within the survey area(s).

Locally important or rare plant communities were found within the survey area(s).

Note that the above statement only addresses whether plant communities, which themselves have protected status, were found. It does not address whether the habitats of special status species were found. This question is addressed in section 3.2 below (covering Species).

Major Plant Communities Summary

Briefly summarize the major plant communities onsite, at the Alliance level, using the State Vegetation Classification (SVC) as maintained by the Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program of the California Department of Fish and Game

(http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/vegcamp/natural_comm_list.asp). Include a description of the particular qualities of the plant communities within the survey area. The description should address the ecological context of the plant community, in terms of relative size, diversity, structure, overall condition (disturbed, burned, intact, etc) and quality, as well as the dominant plant species within the community.

Note that oak woodlands are protected pursuant to the California Oak Woodlands Act, Section 21083.4 of the Public Resources Code. A one-size-fits all definition of oak woodland does not exist; whether oak trees are part of a woodland will vary depending upon the type of oak, its characteristic plant community, and the local biological context. It is important to recognize that one of the most significant impacts to oak woodlands is the blocking of the potential for regeneration. Note also that the Oak Woodlands Act outlines specific mitigation requirements, including the provision that only 50% of the mitigation required for significant impacts to oak woodlands may be fulfilled by replanting oak trees.

The following categories should be used when appropriate in addition to the SVC categories.

Cleared Land. Occurs as sparsely vegetated to non-vegetated disturbed land. It is usually graded land that is not vegetated or has begun to re-vegetate. Typical situations are graded lands that are under construction, and isolated house pads. Dirt roads are another example. **NOTE:** Please identify to the

best of your ability the plant community that likely existed prior to clearing by noting this in the Comments section of the Plant Communities Table below.

Urban/Disturbed or Built-Up. Where urban or built-up non-vacant land use is present.

Agriculture. Where non-built up agricultural land use is present. Agricultural uses include field crops, orchards, nursery fields, and pastures.

Undifferentiated Exotic Vegetation. Where non-native trees and/or shrubs occupy the landscape. They are usually found adjacent to urban land use, but may also occur within the wildlands.

Undifferentiated Ornamental Shrubland. Mapped where there is a stand of ornamental shrubs of undetermined type. They are found adjacent to urban land use, but may also occur within the wildlands.

Use of “Disturbed” As a Modifier: “Disturbed” should not be used as a separate plant community category. However a disturbed condition can be associated with the dominant plant community. For example, “Purple Sage Shrubland: Disturbed.”

Treatment of Burned, Graded or Cleared Lands

Burned Habitat: Vegetation in areas recovering from fire should be classified and mapped using the resurgent vegetation as indicators of the probable plant communities. When the fire is so recent that no new vegetation has emerged, historical evidence such as aerial photos and the County’s vegetation map should be used to classify and map the plant communities that were burned.

Previously Graded/Cleared Lands: Vegetation in cleared or graded areas should be classified and mapped as Cleared Land, and a note should be made in the Comments column of the Plant Communities table identifying to the best of your ability the plant community that likely existed prior to clearing. Adjacent existing plant communities and historical evidence such as aerial photos and the County’s vegetation map should be used to identify the plant communities that were cleared.

Plant Communities Table

Only one record is needed in the table for each plant community, even if the plant community is represented by multiple polygons, unless the attribute information (such as the condition) for a given polygon is different.

Mapping Inside the Construction Footprint: Inside the Construction Footprint a finer scale of mapping is important, such as to distinguish between intact and disturbed habitats, because mitigation ratios may be dependent upon these distinctions.

Mapping Outside the Construction Footprint: The purpose of mapping plant communities outside the Construction Footprint is primarily to identify sensitive biological resources that could be indirectly impacted by the project. Thus a finer scale of mapping, such as of disturbed habitats, generally is not needed, unless such mapping offers useful information on a particular project.

Plot each record on the Plant Communities Map using the map key, the Alliance category and the condition. Examples are provided.

Plant Communities								
Map Key (1)	SVC Alliance	SVC Association	Misc. (2)	Status (3)	Condition (4)	Acres Total	Acres Impacted	Comments (5)
PC1	Purple Sage Shrubland (<i>Salvia leucophylla</i>)	Salvia leucophylla- Artemisia californica- Eriogonum cinereum/Nassella		ESHA, CDFG Rare (G3S3), LIC	Intact	5.8	3.44	

Plant Communities								
PC2	Purple Sage Shrubland (<i>Salvia leucophylla</i>)	Salvia leucophylla- Eriogonum cinereum/Annual Grass-Herb		ESHA, CDFG Rare (G3S3), LIC	Disturbed	.38	.38	
PC3			Cleared Land			.25	.25	Existing dirt roads.
Totals						6.43	4.07	
LIC Locally Important Plant Community ESHA Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (Coastal Zone) CDFG Rare: G1 or S1 Critically Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state) G2 or S2 Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state) G3 or S3 Vulnerable to extirpation or extinction Globally or Subnationally (state) Cal OWA Protected by the California Oak Woodlands Act								

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Plant Communities map keys start with “PC” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “PC1, PC2.”

2) Misc:

Use this column for miscellaneous plant community categories including Cleared Land, Urban/Disturbed or Built-Up, Agriculture, Undifferentiated Exotic Vegetation, Undifferentiated Ornamental Shrubland.

3) Status:

Indicate whether the plant community meets the criteria of a locally important plant community (LIC) such as oak woodlands, has a NatureServe conservation status ranking of critically imperiled (G1 or S1), imperiled (G2 or S2) or vulnerable to extirpation or extinction (G3 or S3), or is otherwise considered sensitive, for instance plant communities associated with riparian or wetland habitat. If oaks are part of the community, discuss their protection status under the Oak Woodlands Act.

4) Condition:

Give the plant community one of the following condition rankings:

Intact, Disturbed, Graded–No Permits Assumed, Grade –Permits Assumed, Cleared-No Permits Assumed, Cleared-Permits Assumed, Burned

5) Comments:

Provide any other comments related to condition or status of the plant community or any irregularities here.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)

Include this section for projects in the Coastal Zone only. Outside of the Coastal Zone, remove this section.

ESHA is “any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments” (Public Resources Code § 30107.5). ESHA includes coastal dunes, beaches, tidepools, wetlands, creek corridors, and certain upland habitats in the Santa Monica Mountains (Ventura County Coastal Area Plan).

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

Habitats that meet the definition of ESHA were not found within the survey area(s).

Habitats that meet the definition of ESHA were found within the survey area(s).

Identify and map ESHA for the entire parcel(s) on which the project is proposed. Provide an explanation for why the areas identified as ESHA on the map were found to meet the definition of ESHA above. For ESHA in the Santa Monica Mountains, refer to the Coastal Commission memorandum titled Designation of ESHA in the Santa Monica Mountains, posted here:

http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/pdf/bio/ESHA_Santa_Monica_Mountains.pdf. Also, if certain areas are not identified as ESHA on the map, provide an explanation for why these areas do not meet the definition of ESHA.

Note: Within the M Overlay Zone (the Coastal Zone portion of the Santa Monica Mountains) a restrictive covenant must be recorded on all ESHA identified on a project site to assure that such habitat areas are permanently maintained in open space, in accordance with the Ventura County Coastal Zoning Ordinance, Section 8177-4.2.2(a).

Physical Features

Physical Features Table

Describe in the table below any physical features, such as rock outcroppings, riprap, caves or cliff faces that may be important to the site’s biological resources.

An example is provided. Plot each record on the Plant Communities Map using the map key and the physical feature name.

Physical Features		
Map Key (1)	Physical Feature (2)	Comments (3)
PF1	Volcanic outcrop	Provides habitat for special status species, including Conejo dudlea (federally threatened).

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Physical Features map keys start with “PF” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “PF1, PF2.”

2) Type of physical feature:

Physical features may include rock outcrops, caves, abandoned structures, talus piles, rubble, log piles, or other physical features that are providing habitat to plant and wildlife species.

3) Comments:

Include comments about the uniqueness or rarity of the feature, the types of wildlife the habitat may support, etc.

Waters and Wetlands

Include the following introduction only if wetlands occur within or near the survey area or would be impacted by the project.

See Appendix One for an overview of the local, state and federal regulations protecting waters, wetlands and riparian habitats. Wetlands are complex systems; delineating their specific boundaries, functions and values generally takes a level of effort beyond the scope of an Initial Study Biological Assessment (ISBA). The goal of the ISBA with regard to waters and wetlands is simply to identify whether they may exist or not and to determine the potential for impacts to them from the proposed project. This much information can be adequate for designing projects to avoid impacts to waters and wetlands. Additional studies are generally warranted to delineate specific wetland

boundaries and to develop recommendations for impact minimization or impact mitigation measures.

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

Waters or wetlands were not found within the survey area(s).

Waters and/or wetlands were found within the survey area(s).

Waters and Wetlands Summary

Describe the general location of all waters and wetlands located within 300 feet (in non-coastal zone) or 500 feet (in coastal zone) of the construction footprint.

Describe the overall habitat quality in terms of disturbance, species diversity and connectivity to off-site habitat or hydrologic features. Discuss the local and regional importance of the waters and wetlands.

If a wetland has been recently graded or disturbed, describe the wetland’s likely characteristics prior to disturbance based on historical evidence or surrounding habitat.

Waters and Wetlands Table

Summarize in the table below all wetland features described above in the Wetland Summary. Complete all fields for each distinct wetland feature observed. The boundaries of riparian habitat may in some cases mirror a previously mapped plant community boundary. In such cases, include both a wetlands map key and the associated plant community map key. In cases where a water or wetland has been graded or otherwise damaged, rank the wetland’s significance based on what was likely prior to the disturbance and discuss the damage in the Comments field.

Initial Study Simplified Waters/Wetlands Mapping – For the purposes of the Initial Study, the boundaries of any waters or wetlands should be defined as the outermost limit of the riparian vegetation (canopy drip line or scrub line boundary), hydric soils, or the defined bed and bank of a drainage feature, whichever is greatest. If the project will not avoid impacts to the waters or wetlands thus mapped, or to the County-required 100’ setback buffer (see discussion below), then in most cases, a formal wetland delineation should be recommended (through an additional study).

Plot each record on the Wetland Map using the map key and the wetland type. An example is provided.

Waters and Wetlands						
Map Key (1)	Wetland Type (2)	Wetland Name (if any)	Wetland Status (3) (if known)	Wetland Size (4)	Hydrologic Status (5)	Primary Water Source (6)
W1	Stream/drainage	Unnamed	Unknown	60 linear ft onsite, reach is ~150 linear ft	Flowing	Runoff
USACE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulated CDFG California Department of Fish & Game regulated County County General Plan protected wetland WPD Co. Watershed Protection District (red-line stream)						

Waters and Wetlands (continued)			
Map Key	County Wetland Significance (7)	Wetland Distance from Project (8)	Comments (9)
W1	Significant	150'	Drainage is a tributary of Little Sycamore Creek. Contains healthy, relatively undisturbed riparian habitat with few invasive species.

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key(s):

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Wetland map keys start with “W” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “W1, W2.”

2) Wetland type:

Use the following terms to label the wetland or wetland system type:

Stream/drainage, river, riparian habitat, pond, ditch-paved, ditch-unpaved, retention/detention basin, seep, spring, wet meadow, dune swale, lake, estuary/salt marsh/lagoon, vernal pool/pond/lake, other.

3) Wetland status:

Indicate, if known, whether the wetland could potentially be regulated/protected by: USACE, CDFG, or the County General Plan.

4) Wetland size:

Estimate the approximate area of the entire wetland feature, in acres or linear feet as appropriate, as well as the area of the feature that is contained within the survey area. For streams, drainages and rivers provide the size of the reach.

5) Hydrologic status:

Describe the primary hydrologic status using one of the following terms:

dry, saturated, ponded, flowing

6) Primary water source:

If known, describe the primary source of water using one of the following terms:

precipitation, groundwater, natural runoff, adjacent tidal or fresh water body, urban runoff, agricultural runoff, other runoff, direct irrigation, pumped water, artificially impounded water, other artificial sources.

7) Wetland significance:

Significance here relates strictly to County General Plan Policy 1.5.2-3: “Discretionary development that would have a significant impact on significant wetland habitats shall be prohibited....” Thus describe the wetland’s significance relative to ecological functions and values using one of the following terms:

Significant, Not Significant, Unknown

If the wetland has been graded or disturbed, describe the wetland’s likely significance prior to the disturbance based on historical evidence or surrounding habitat characteristics.

NOTE: The determination of significance is related to the County’s General Plan policy; bear in mind that a wetland that is not deemed to be ecologically significant may still be protected under federal or state law – even if highly degraded.

8) Distance from project:

Note the distance, if any, between the construction footprint and the wetland. If the wetland is within the construction footprint, enter “Within Construction Footprint.”

NOTE: if the waters or wetlands are within 300 feet (in non-coastal zone) or 500 feet (in coastal zone), potential impacts to the waters or wetlands must be evaluated (in later sections of the report).

9) Comments

Generally describe the feature’s health, degree of degradation or significance.

Water/Wetland Buffers Table

The minimum setback distance for discretionary development from a significant wetland habitat (per the General Plan) is 100 feet. This minimum buffer distance may be increased or decreased on a case-by-case basis based on the recommendation of the biologist. Describe in the table below your recommendation for the appropriate buffer distance from any waters or wetlands deemed significant in the above table.

Plot each record on the Wetland Map using the map key.

Water/Wetland Buffers		
Map Key (1)	Recommended Buffer (2)	Comments
W1B1	125'	The significance of this wetland habitat together with the large amount of development being proposed and already occurring along its reach, warrant a greater buffer to protect its functions.

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key(s):

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Wetland buffer map keys start with the map key for the associated wetland, such as “W1,” with the addition of “B,” as in “W1B1.”

2) Recommended buffer:

This minimum 100’ buffer distance may be increased or decreased on a case-by-case basis based on the recommendation of the biologist. Provide your professional opinion about what the appropriate buffer distance should be for each wetland and why.

Other Areas/Observations

Other Observations Table

Describe in the table below any other features not captured in the above tables, such as stockpiled materials, buried materials, chemical spills, etc.

Plot each record on the Site and Survey Map using the map key and the name of the feature. An example is provided.

Other Observations		
Map Key (1)	Describe Features (Violations, other observations, etc.)	Comments
O1	Large pile of broken concrete.	Concrete is stockpiled 15’ from the stream.

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Other Observations map keys start with “O” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “O1, O2.”

[Insert Plant Communities, ESHA and Wetlands Maps here](#)

3.2 Species

Observed Species

Provide a general summary of the plant and animal species observed during the ISBA survey here, and refer to Appendix 2 for a full list of observed species (See Appendix 2 for specifications on the full list). In the summary, emphasize observations of special-status species, overall diversity of the site, and proportion of observed species that are native versus non-native.

Protected Trees

Provide an inventory of the *protected trees* within the survey area, including the species, girth, and whether or not each is proposed for removal or encroachment within the tree’s *protected zone* by the project. Include protected trees on adjacent parcels if the tree’s protected zone extends over the property line and into the survey area. The list of *protected trees* and definition for *protected zone* can be found in

Section 8107-25 of the County’s Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance. In addition, identify the location of any *protected trees* on the Species Map below.

Important: The status of a tree as “protected” by the Zoning Ordinance should not be used to determine whether impacts are biologically significant. *Protected trees* are not necessarily locally important species or significant biological resources. We ask the biologist to note the presence of protected status trees for informational purposes only. In the ISBA the evaluation of impacts to trees, protected or otherwise, must be based on the biological value of the trees. Mitigation recommended in the ISBA to reduce impacts to trees must reduce the biological impact to less than significant. The offsets described in the County’s Tree Protection Guidelines are not to be recommended as mitigation for biological impacts.

If the project would result in removal of or encroachment on one or more *protected trees*, please advise the applicant that an arborist report will likely be required and he/she should consult with the Planning Division regarding the need for an arborist report.

Protected Trees				
Map Key (1)	Species (2)	Common Name	Girth (3) (circumference)	Impact (4)
T1	<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast live oak	20 inches	Removal/Encroachment/Not Impacted

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key(s):

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Protected Tree map keys start with “T” followed by sequential numbers, such as “T1,” “T2,” etc.

2) Species:

The scientific name for the tree.

3) Girth:

Girth, or circumference, is generally measured at 4.5 feet above the ground unless there is abnormal swelling at that location, in which case it should be measured above the swell where the normal trunk resumes. If the trunk is at an angle, the distance is measured along the trunk’s centerline.

4) Impact:

Insert “removal” when a tree is planned for removal, “encroachment” when a project would encroach within the *protected zone* of the tree, and “not impacted” when the project would not involve removal of or encroachment on the tree.

Special Status Species and Nests

See Appendix One for definitions of the types of special status species that have federal, state or local protection and for more information on the regulations that protect birds’ nests.

Background Research

Before conducting the field visit, perform background research to develop a list of special status species potentially within the survey area. A 10-mile radius from the survey area boundary normally provides a useful frame of reference for developing such a list. The most current edition of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), the USFWS Critical Habitat maps, the Calflora database, and Ventura County Planning Division’s GIS layer (available in BIOS) of past biological reports are all useful references.

Special status species include species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Rare under the federal or state Endangered Species Acts, Candidate Species, California Fully Protected Species, and, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15380(d), all other species tracked by the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), which are considered by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) to be those species of greatest conservation concern, and locally important species as defined by the Ventura

County General Plan and the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines. Plant species with a California Rare Plant Rank (Rank) of 1 (plants presumed extinct in California, or rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (plants that are rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere) or 4 (plants of limited distribution in California) are included in this definition, but plant species with a Rank of 3 (plants for which insufficient information is available to determine their status) are not included in this definition. Plant species with a Rank of 3, if found, should be included in the Special Status Species table for information purposes. Species tracked by the CNDDDB are listed in CDFG's lists of Special Plants and Special Animals. The Planning Division's criteria for, and preliminary list of, County locally important species should be reviewed (http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/cega/bio_resource_review.html).

Note that special status species and active nests are addressed in this section. Rare and locally important plant communities are addressed in the Habitats section.

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.) In some cases, focused protocol surveys must be conducted to determine presence/absence of a species, in which case these surveys should be conducted before choosing the statement below.

Special status species were not found and are not expected to occur within the survey area(s).

Special status species were observed or have a moderate to high potential to occur within the survey area(s).

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

Habitat suitable for nests of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not exist within the survey area(s).

Habitat suitable for nests of birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does exist within the survey area(s).

Special Status Species Summary

Provide a brief summary of special status species findings.

Observed and Potential Special Status Species Table

Observed Species

Describe in the table below all special status species observed within the survey area or in areas directly or indirectly affected by the project. Complete all fields for each species observed. Clear physical evidence (recent tracks, scat, burrows, nests) can be considered an observation. Examples are provided.

Map/Record the Observation: Only one record is needed in the table for each observation, even if the species is represented by multiple polygons (such as clusters of a given plant species spread over a large area), unless the specific observation location is important or if the attribute information (such as the habitat quality/suitability) for a given polygon is different. Plot each record, using points or polygons as appropriate, on the Species Map using the map key (SSO).

NOTE: if any state or federal special status species are observed, a copy of the biologist's submitted CNDDDB report form must be included with the final biology report.

Map/Record the Habitat: For observed special status animals, include an additional record (in the table below and on the map) indicating the area that represents the species' habitat, if present onsite. The habitat boundaries could correlate with the boundaries of a plant community that has already been mapped, the habitat could be a subset of a mapped plant community, or it could straddle multiple mapped plant communities. In all cases, use the map key format indicated below (SSO1-H1, etc.).

Potential Species

Describe in the table below the following:

- All special status species that, though not directly observed, are recorded in the CNDDDB within at least five miles of the construction footprint.
- Any other special status species that, though not directly observed, have a **moderate to high** potential to be present on or adjacent to the survey area.
- Any other unobserved special status species that have a **low** potential to be present but for which, in the biologist’s opinion, the discussion of why the potential is low is warranted.

Definitions of Low, Moderate and High Potential to Occur

When reviewing proposed projects for impacts to special-status species, habitat suitability, species’ preferred habitats, known range of the species, and quality of habitat on the project site are reviewed as well as past recorded occurrences of the species on or near the project site. If the species was not observed on the project site, the potential for the species to occur on the site must be described. The potential can be low, moderate, or high. These degrees of potential for species occurrence are generally defined below.

High potential for occurrence: (1) The habitat on the project site is the species’ preferred habitat and is in good condition (has not been degraded by human disturbance); and/or (2) there is record of the species occurring on or adjacent to the project site.

Moderate potential for occurrence: (1) The habitat on the project site is the species’ preferred habitat, but it has been disturbed or disturbance encompasses the project site, reducing the quality of the habitat to below a high likelihood that the species would inhabit it; or (2) the habitat on the project site is not the species’ preferred habitat, but it contains a similar structure to the preferred habitat and the species has been observed in this habitat type; or (3) the habitat on the project site is not the species’ preferred habitat, but there is record of the species occurring in the immediate vicinity of the project site, and there is potential for the species to forage within the habitat on-site.

Low potential for occurrence: The habitat on the project site is not the species’ preferred habitat, the habitat is highly disturbed, and/or there are no records of the species occurring on or near the project site.

NOTE: Some special status species have been known to utilize highly degraded habitats in the absence of “suitable” habitat, such as the least Bell’s vireo’s use of arundo donax for nesting on the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers. The biologist should keep this fact in mind when making judgments about whether “suitable” habitat exists onsite. Degraded or unconventional habitat can in fact be suitable.

Complete all fields for each potential species. The most current taxonomy should be used for the scientific names. All taxa should be identified to the fullest extent possible for those with subspecies/varieties. Plot the potential habitat area of each species, using polygons, on the Species Map using the map key (SSP).

Observed and Potentially Occurring Special Status Species						
Map Key (1)	Survey/ Source (2)	Scientific Name (3)	Common Name	Species’ Status (4)	Potential to Occur (5)	Habitat Requirements (6)
SSO1	SD1	<i>Dichondra occidentalis</i>	Western dichondra	LIS	Observed	Occurs in a variety of habitat types, including chaparral, valley grassland, foothill grassland, northern coastal scrub and coastal sage scrub. Generally blooms from March to July and undergoes summer dormancy, reappearing in spring, after winter rains. Prefers cool, shady areas in wind swept coastal areas.

Observed and Potentially Occurring Special Status Species						
SSP1	CNDDB	<i>Phrynosoma coronatum</i>	Coast Horned Lizard	SSC	High	The subspecies found in southern California, <i>blainvillii</i> , is distributed throughout the foothills and coastal plains from Los Angeles area to northern Baja California. A ground dweller, it frequents areas with abundant, open vegetation such as chaparral or coastal sage scrub.
SSP2	DMEC, 2006	<i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i>	San Diego Desert Woodrat	SSC	Moderate	Lives in high desert areas, chaparral, sagebrush flats, and Pinyon-Juniper Woodland.

Special Status Species (continued)				
Map Key	Adequate Habitat Onsite	Adequate Habitat Size (7)	Acreage Impacted	Comments (8)
SSO1	Yes	Yes	3.4	
SSP1	Yes	Yes	4.95	
SSP2	Yes	Yes	4.95	The biological review of another project included in the analysis of cumulative impacts, located approximately two miles from the project site, near Deer Creek Road and Pacific View Road, revealed the presence of four San Diego desert woodrat nests (DMEC, 2006). San Diego Desert Woodrat is vulnerable to predation by coyotes, raccoons, owls, gopher and rattlesnakes, and hawks.
FE Federal Endangered FT Federal Threatened FC..... Federal Candidate Species FSC Federal Species of Concern SFP California Fully Protected Species SE..... California Endangered ST..... California Threatened SR California Rare SSC California Species of Special Concern CDFG/NatureServe Rank G1 or S1 - Critically Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state) G2 or S2 - Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state) G3 or S3 - Vulnerable to extirpation or extinction Globally or Subnationally (state) California Rare Plant Rank (RPR) RPR 1A - California Native Plant Society/CDFG listed as presumed to be extinct RPR 1B - California Native Plant Society/CDFG listed as rare or endangered in California and elsewhere RPR 2 - California Native Plant Society/CDFG listed as rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere RPR 3 - California Native Plant Society/CDFG listed as in need of more information. RPR 4 - California Native Plant Society/CDFG listed as of limited distribution or infrequent throughout a broader area in California. LIS..... Locally Important Species				

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Observed Special Status Species map keys start with “SSO” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “SSO1, SSO2.” To indicate the habitat of a particular observed special status animal, use map keys that add “H1, H2” to the SSO map key, as in “SSO1-H1, SSO1-H2.”

Potential Special Status Species map keys start with “SSP” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “SSP1, SSP2.” Because an observation did not occur, these records always indicate habitat polygons not points, so a separate map key for habitat is not necessary.

2) Survey/Source:

For observed species, list the map key for the survey (from the Survey Details table) during which the observation was made, e.g., SD1. For potential species, refer to the source of the information, e.g., CNDDDB or another biology report conducted in the area.

3) Scientific name:

Provide the complete scientific name to the lowest taxonomic level (subspecies, variety) as appropriate.

4) Species' status:

Use the status acronyms below or add others, if applicable, such as for birds on the WatchList of Birds of Conservation Concern. Be sure the status is the most current. The status can be found in CDFG's most recent lists of Special Plants and Special Animals.

FEFederal Endangered

FTFederal Threatened

FC.....Federal Candidate species

FSCFederal Species of Concern

SFPCalifornia Fully Protected Species

SE.....California Endangered

STCalifornia Threatened

SRCalifornia Rare

SSCCalifornia Species of Special Concern

CDFG/NatureServe Rank

G1 or S1 - Critically Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state)

G2 or S2 - Imperiled Globally or Subnationally (state)

G3 or S3 - Vulnerable to extirpation or extinction Globally or Subnationally (state)

California Rare Plant Ranks (RPR)

RPR 1A - Plants presumed to be extinct because they have not been seen or collected in the wild in California for many years. This list includes plants that are both presumed extinct in California, as well as those plants which are presumed extirpated in California. A plant is extinct in California if it no longer occurs in or outside of California. A plant that is extirpated from California has been eliminated from California, but may still occur elsewhere in its range.

RPR 1B - Plants that are rare throughout their range with the majority of them endemic to California. Most of the plants of List 1B have declined significantly over the last century.

RPR 2 - Plants that are rare throughout their range in California, but are more common beyond the boundaries of California. List 2 recognizes the importance of protecting the geographic range of widespread species.

RPR 3 - A review list for plants for which there is inadequate information to assign them to one of the other lists or to reject them. Plants with an RPR 3 are not considered special status species under the County's threshold criteria unless there is sufficient information to demonstrate that an RPR 3 plant meets the criteria to be listed as an RPR 1, 2, or 4.

RPR 4 - A watch list for plants that are of limited distribution in California.

VC LIS.....Locally Important Species

5) Potential to Occur:

Indicate potential to occur with one of the following:

Observed, High, Moderate, Low, None

6) Habitat requirements:

Describe the species' typical habitat requirements.

7) Habitat size:

Is the habitat area, either onsite or as part of an adjacent habitat area, large enough to support a population of the species? Explain.

8) Comments:

For potential species, include a discussion about why the species has the potential to be found as well as why it was not detected (the later applies primarily to plant species).

Nesting Bird Summary

Describe the potential for nests of birds protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act to be present in the survey area.

Insert Species Map here

3.3 Wildlife Movement and Connectivity

(Initial Study Checklist D)

Background Research

Before conducting the field visit, background research should be conducted to identify expected wildlife habitat or connectivity features. In analyzing potential habitat and connectivity features, the geographic area that must be considered is larger than for any other issue area—from the regional landscape context down to the project-scale.

The following should be reviewed prior to the field visit:

- 1) Ventura County’s Regional Wildlife Corridors map (from the Bio Map Packet)
- 2) Waterbodies of Ventura County map (from the Bio Map Packet)
- 3) Recent high-resolution aerial photos
- 4) Topographic maps
- 5) Any previous biological reports that document wildlife movement in the vicinity (available in BIOS)

Include the appropriate statement below. (Delete the row from the table that does not apply.)

Wildlife movement or connectivity features, or evidence thereof, were not found within the survey area(s).

Wildlife movement or connectivity features, or evidence thereof, were found within the survey area(s).

Connectivity Features

Does any part of a documented Corridor or Linkage lie within the survey area or in the immediate vicinity? If yes, describe.

Connectivity Features Table

Describe in the table below all observed and documented connectivity features (e.g., corridors, linkages, stepping stones) within or adjacent to the survey area. Complete all fields for each connectivity feature.

An example is provided. Plot each record on the Habitat Connectivity Map using the map key and the connectivity feature type.

Connectivity Features							
Map Key (1)	Type of Connectivity Feature (2)	Description (3)	Species Observed (4)	Evidence (5)	Functional Group/Species Expected (6)	Habitats Connected (7)	Comments
C1	corridor	watercourse	coyote, bobcat	tracks	Mammals, birds,	Santa Susana	

Connectivity Features						
					aquatic/riparian reptiles/ amphibians	Mountains – Tierra Rejada Valley

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map Key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Connectivity feature map keys start with “C” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “C1, C2.”

2) Type of Connectivity Feature:

Describe using one of the following terms: linkage, corridor, route, chokepoint, stepping stone corridor.

3) Description:

Describe the basic nature of the feature (e.g. watercourse with riparian habitat or oak woodland).

4) Species Observed:

List the species that were observed, either directly or through evidence, using the connectivity feature.

5) Evidence:

Describe the type of observation: e.g., live, nest, tracks, scat, hair, etc. If evidence comes from a report on previous observations of wildlife using the feature, cite that report here.

6) Functional Group/Species Expected:

Indicate which other species are expected to use the connectivity feature. If the species are not known, indicate which functional group(s). Functional groups include: large mammals, medium mammals, small mammals, birds and bats, aquatic/riparian reptiles and amphibians, upland reptiles, and mesopredators. (Mesopredators as used here refers to predators that have a direct connection to human development such as dogs, cats and rats).

7) Habitats Connected:

Describe the habitats that the connectivity feature is connecting.

Crossing Structures Table

Describe in the table below all existing and proposed roadway crossing structures within or adjacent to the survey area. Complete all fields for each crossing structure.

An example is provided. Plot each record on the Habitat Connectivity Map using the map key and the crossing structure type.

Roadway Crossing Structures						
Map Key (1)	Type of Crossing Structure (2)	Passable? (3)	Functional Group/Species Expected (4)	Species Observed (5)	Evidence	Comments
CS1	existing box culvert	The culvert is open and aiding movement	small, medium & large mammals, upland reptiles	coyote	prints	Allows passage underneath Hwy 23.

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map Key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Crossing Structure map keys start with “CS” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “CS1, CS2.”

2) Type of crossing structure:

Describe using one of the following terms: existing box culvert, existing pipe culvert, existing road underpass, proposed box culvert, proposed pipe culvert, proposed road underpass, other.

3) Passable?:

Crossing structures can sometimes act as barriers. Indicate whether the existing crossing structure is actually passable or is hindering movement. If the structure is impassable, explain why and include the structure in the Barriers table below.

4) Functional Group/Species Expected:

Indicate which species are expected to use the crossing structure. If the species are not known, indicate which functional group(s) are expected. Functional groups include: large mammals, medium mammals, small mammals, birds and bats, aquatic/riparian reptiles and amphibians, upland reptiles and mesopredators.

5) Species Observed:

For existing crossing structures, indicate any species observed using the structure. Evidence of use (such as from tracks) can be considered an observation. If evidence comes from a report on previous observations of wildlife using the feature, cite that report here.

Connectivity Barriers Table

Describe in the table below all barriers to connectivity within the survey area. A barrier to connectivity may include a road, housing development, fencing, or any other type of man-made barrier that restricts fish or wildlife movement. Complete all fields for each barrier observed.

An example is provided. Plot each record on the Habitat Connectivity Map using the map key and the barrier type.

Barriers			
Map Key (1)	Barrier Type (2)	Species/Functional Groups Affected (3)	Comments (4)
B1	Existing crossing structure.	Large, medium and small mammals.	The structure is filled in with sediment and now acts like a barrier.
B2	Existing road	Large, medium and small mammals.	A two-lane road that receives a fair amount of traffic that is likely to result in roadkill.

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Barrier map keys start with “B” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “B1, B2.”

2) Barriers type:

Describe the type of barrier to wildlife movement (roads, fences, crossing structures, etc.). Indicate whether barrier is existing or proposed.

3) Species/Functional Groups Affected:

List the species or functional groups that are/would be affected by the barrier.

4) Comments:

Describe how the barrier is or will restrict movement for the species/functional group identified. State whether the impediment is temporary or permanent.

Insert Connectivity Map here

Section 4: Recommended Impact Assessment & Mitigation

4.1 Sufficiency of Biological Data

Additional information needed to make CEQA findings and develop mitigation measures:

If after the Initial Study Biological Assessment there is insufficient information to recommend CEQA findings, list the additional data needed in order to make such findings, such as:

- Botanical surveys
- Wildlife surveys

Include any important time schedules for the above.

Additional biology-related surveys or permits needed prior to issuance of land use permit:

Some projects require additional surveys or permits to satisfy other agencies' requirements. Discuss the need for any additional permits or agreements, such as wetlands delineations or permits (401, 404, 1600, etc.), or endangered species permits, etc.

4.2 Impacts and Mitigation

Impacts

Discuss the potential impacts of the proposed project for the issues listed below. Indicate whether No Impact, Less than Significant, Potentially Significant But Mitigable, or Potentially Significant. **For each "LS," "PS-M" and "PS" response provide an explanation of the evidence that supports the recommended finding.**

Potential impacts must be adequately spatially referenced. If the project has more than one survey area, indicate in the discussion which survey area the impacts are associated with.

Use the following as guidance in the analysis of impacts:

Refer to the Threshold of Significance Criteria listed in Section 4 of the County's Initial Study Assessment Guidelines to evaluate the significance of potential biological impacts from the project.

Whenever possible, quantify potential effects, e.g. "project will result in the elimination of 3.5 acres of coastal scrub habitat."

Discuss the importance of project effects within the context of the known distribution and conservation status of the resource.

Discuss the project's impacts with respect to the biological resource goals and policies of the County, and state and federal regulatory agencies.

Consider in the discussion all phases and aspects of development including grading, construction, occupation, and/or operation. Include the effects of fire hazard brush clearance requirements, roads, and water and sewer lines.

Discuss impacts that limit species' resting, breeding, or foraging areas or geographic distribution. Consider existing threats to species; habitat fragmentation; sensitivity to dust, noise, light, heat, desiccation; increased predation (including by pets and feral animals); and the introduction of foreign substances (e.g., water pollution, invasive plants or animals), etc.

Discuss the potential of the project to exacerbate any invasive plant or animal population existing on or adjacent to the site.

Discuss the short-term and long-term impacts of the project on significant biological resources.

Mitigation Measures

IMPORTANT: The development of mitigation measures generally requires very detailed information. An additional, more detailed biological assessment therefore may be necessary to capture the level of detail, in terms of impact and mapped data, necessary to develop appropriate and effective mitigation measures.

This section should only be completed as part of an ISBA if the mitigation measure is relatively common or straightforward, such as timing construction activities to avoid the nesting season, or if enough data, including mapped data, was gathered during the ISBA site visit to develop effective mitigation measures. Sufficient, detailed information must be compiled for the record to justify recommended mitigation measures. **DO NOT** provide mitigation measures if inadequate information was provided by the ISBA. In this situation, further analysis and an EIR should be recommended.

Significance findings, and associated mitigations, must be based on the existing project description. However, it can be stated that impacts could be avoided with a project redesign, which can be recommended as a mitigation measure.

Use the following as guidance in the development of mitigation measures.

Consider the suitability of each mitigation approach listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15370 (avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing or eliminating, compensating), to reduce impacts to a level of insignificance.

Identify the mitigation measures that would protect the resources to the maximum extent feasible.

Consider a range of possibilities, including: avoidance, fencing, restrictive covenants (deed restrictions), conservation easements, clustering and off-site mitigation.

Identify the potential for the restoration of damaged habitats where appropriate and feasible.

(Note on Restrictive Covenants: When avoidance of a significant biological resource is the method selected to mitigate a potentially significant impact, the mechanism to implement this mitigation is the recordation of a restrictive covenant. In order to record a restrictive covenant, the Planning Division requires a map of the area to be avoided (restricted). The area recommended for avoidance must be mapped and provided with this report. If the area is mapped using GIS, please provide a copy of the shapefile to the Planning Division, because the Division maintains a GIS layer of all restrictive covenants recorded throughout the County.)

For each significant impact, explicitly state whether the proposed mitigation measures would reduce the significance level to "less than significant, and provide an explanation to support the recommended finding. If a mitigation measure does not fully reduce the level of impact to less than significant, an EIR must be prepared to continue with the project approval process.

Include, for easy reference, the appropriate Initial Study checklist code (N, LS, PS-M or M) in the title bar for each of the three subject areas below (for both project-level and cumulative effects).

A. Species

Project: XX; Cumulative: XX

If the Biological Assessment provided adequate information, complete this section.

Discuss/describe/quantify potential direct and indirect project- and cumulative-level impacts following the instructions provided above. If potentially significant impacts are mitigable, describe how the recommended mitigation measures would reduce the impacts to less than significant and list the mitigation measures below.

For observed species, include the number of individuals of the special-status species observed (estimates are acceptable for large populations) and the approximate number of individuals that would be potentially impacted.

Significance Finding – Project Impacts: Rank each impact as: No Impact, Less than Significant, Potentially Significant but Mitigable, or Potentially Significant.

Significance Finding – Cumulative Impacts: Rank each impact as: No Impact, Less than Significant, Potentially Significant but Mitigable, or Potentially Significant.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Avoidance and minimization of potential impacts during project design is recommended ahead of mitigation. Discuss here any measures that have been implemented during project design to avoid or minimize impacts to the resource.

MM1: Title of Mitigation Measure

The mitigation measure discussion should include the following sections:

Purpose:

Describe the purpose of the mitigation action and the resource impact being mitigated.

Requirement:

Describe the mitigation action. Include acreages or other measures/numbers when appropriate. Include measurable success criteria.

Documentation:

Describe the documentation that should be provided by the project proponent to demonstrate implementation of the mitigation measure and achievement of the success criteria.

Timing:

Include recommendations for timing of implementation of the mitigation measure and monitoring time intervals.

Monitoring and Reporting:

Provide recommendations on the method to monitor and report on the implementation and success of the mitigation measure.

Mapped Information:

The implementation and monitoring of some mitigation measures necessitates that they be spatially referenced. Such mitigation measures should be mapped on the Mitigation Map using the map key. For example, resources to be protected during construction, areas to be restored, and areas to be placed in a conservation easement should be mapped. Mitigation measure map keys start with “MM” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “MM1, MM2.” Use the same map key number to refer to the mitigation measure in the text.

B. Ecological Communities

Project: **XX**; Cumulative: **XX**

Sensitive Plant Communities

Instructions same as above.

Waters and Wetlands

Instructions same as above.

Mitigation for Wetland Habitats: For waters and/or wetlands under the jurisdiction of federal and state agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and California Department of Fish and Game), mitigation is normally required through the permitting process of these agencies. Therefore, it is important to consult with these agencies during the Initial Study Biological Assessment to determine whether the water/wetland is within the jurisdiction of one or more of these agencies and to determine the amount and type of mitigation that will be sufficient to meet the requirements of these permitting agencies. One consistent mitigation plan that meets the requirements

of all permitting agencies AND THE COUNTY will be easier and more cost effective for the applicant to implement.

CDFG must evaluate impacts under CEQA before issuing a Streambed Alteration Agreement. CDFG does this by acting as a responsible agency during the County's preparation of the environmental document and assisting the County with preparing an adequate environmental document. Therefore, the mitigation ultimately recommended in the County's environmental document must be acceptable to CDFG. This information MUST BE CONSIDERED when developing mitigation measures for significant impacts to waters/wetlands.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

Instructions same as above.

C. Habitat Connectivity (migration corridors)

Project: XX; Cumulative: XX

Instructions same as above.

Insert Mitigation Map here

Section 5: Photos

Photos Table:

Describe and insert, in the table format below, the color photos taken of the survey area and submitted with this report. Plot each record on the Site and Survey Map using the map key. Include a reasonable number of photos to adequately characterize the site, especially the proposed development site.

Photos	
Location	(insert photo here)
Map Key	
P1	
View Direction	
South	
Description	
Cleared area of building pad overlooking the Pacific Ocean.	
Location	(insert photo here)
Map Key	
P2	
View Direction	
Southwest	
Description	
View of existing driveway leading up to main building pad.	

Photos	
Location	(insert photo here)
Map Key	
P3	
View Direction	
South	
Description	
View of existing road heading south from proposed tennis court pad. Coastal sage-chaparral scrub vegetation on either side of dirt road.	
Location	(insert photo here)
Map Key	
P4	
View Direction	
South	
Description	
View of coastal sage-chaparral scrub vegetation. California sage brush, with sage, purple needlegrass and laurel sumac can be seen in photograph.	

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Map Key:

A unique alpha-numeric designation for identifying mapped records. Photo map keys start with “P” followed by sequential numbers, e.g., “P1, P2.”

Appendix One

Summary of Biological Resource Regulations

The Ventura County Planning Division, as “lead agency” under CEQA for issuing discretionary land use permits, uses the relationship of a potential environmental effect from a proposed project to an established regulatory standard to determine the significance of the potential environmental effect. This Appendix summarizes important biological resource regulations which are used by the Division’s biologists (consultants and staff) in making CEQA findings of significance:

- Sensitive Status Species Regulations
- Nesting Bird Regulations
- Plant Community Regulations
- Tree Regulations
- Waters and Wetlands Regulations
- Coastal Habitat Regulations
- Wildlife Migration Regulations
- Locally Important Species/Communities Regulations

Sensitive Status Species Regulations

Federally Protected Species

Ventura County is home to 29 federally listed endangered and threatened plant and wildlife species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regulates the protection of federally listed endangered and threatened plant and wildlife species.

FE (Federally Endangered): A species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

FT (Federally Threatened): A species that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

FC (Federal Candidate): A species for which USFWS has sufficient information on its biological status and threats to propose it as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but for which development of a proposed listing regulation is precluded by other higher priority listing activities.

FSC (Federal Species of Concern): A species under consideration for listing, for which there is insufficient information to support listing at this time. These species may or may not be listed in the future, and many of these species were formerly recognized as "Category-2 Candidate" species.

The USFWS requires permits for the “take” of any federally listed endangered or threatened species. “Take” is defined by the USFWS as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct; may include significant habitat modification or degradation if it kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.”

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) does not provide statutory protection for candidate species or species of concern, but USFWS encourages conservation efforts to protect these species. USFWS can set up voluntary Candidate Conservation Agreements and Assurances, which provide non-Federal landowners (public and private) with the assurance that if they implement various conservation activities to protect a given candidate species, they will not be subject to additional restrictions if the species becomes listed under the ESA.

State Protected Species

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) regulates the protection of endangered, threatened, and fully protected species listed under the California Endangered Species Act. Some species may be jointly listed under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts.

SE (California Endangered): A native species or subspecies which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease.

ST (California Threatened): A native species or subspecies that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and

management efforts required by this chapter. Any animal determined by the commission as "rare" on or before January 1, 1985, is a "threatened species."

SFP (California Fully Protected Species): This designation originated from the State's initial effort in the 1960's to identify and provide additional protection to those animals that were rare or faced possible extinction. Lists were created for fish, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and birds. Most fully protected species have also been listed as threatened or endangered species under the more recent endangered species laws and regulations.

SR (California Rare): A species, subspecies, or variety of plant is rare under the Native Plant Protection Act when, although not presently threatened with extinction, it is in such small numbers throughout its range that it may become endangered if its present environment worsens. Animals are no longer listed as rare; all animals listed as rare before 1985 have been listed as threatened.

SSC (California Species of Special Concern): Animals that are not listed under the California Endangered Species Act, but which nonetheless 1) are declining at a rate that could result in listing, or 2) historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist.

The CDFG requires permits for the "take" of any State-listed endangered or threatened species. Section 2080 of the Fish and Game Code prohibits "take" of any species that the California Fish and Game Commission determines to be endangered or threatened. "Take" is defined in Section 86 of the Fish and Game Code as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill."

The California Native Plant Protection Act protects endangered and rare plants of California. Section 1908, which regulates plants listed under this act, states: "no person shall import into this state, or take, possess, or sell within this state, except as incident to the possession or sale of the real property on which the plant is growing, any native plant, or any part or product thereof, that the commission determines to be an endangered native plant or rare native plant, except as otherwise provided in this chapter."

Unlike endangered, threatened, and rare species, for which a take permit may be issued, California Fully Protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except for collecting these species for necessary scientific research and relocation of the bird species for the protection of livestock.

The California Endangered Species Act does not provide statutory protection for California species of special concern, but they should be considered during the environmental review process.

California Rare Plant Ranks (RPR)

Plants with 1A, 1B, 2 or 4 should always be addressed in CEQA documents. Plants with a RPR 3 do not need to be addressed in CEQA documents unless there is sufficient information to demonstrate that a RPR 3 plant meets the criteria to be listed as a RPR 1, 2, or 4.

RPR 1A: Plants presumed to be extinct because they have not been seen or collected in the wild in California for many years. This list includes plants that are both presumed extinct in California, as well as those plants which are presumed extirpated in California. A plant is extinct in California if it no longer occurs in or outside of California. A plant that is extirpated from California has been eliminated from California, but may still occur elsewhere in its range.

RPR 1B: Plants that are rare throughout their range with the majority of them endemic to California. Most of the plants of List 1B have declined significantly over the last century.

RPR 2: Plants that are rare throughout their range in California, but are more common beyond the boundaries of California. List 2 recognizes the importance of protecting the geographic range of widespread species.

Plants identified as RPR 1A, 1B, and 2 meet the definitions of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection Act) or Secs. 2062 and 2067 (California Endangered Species Act) of the California Department of Fish and Game Code, and are eligible for state listing.

RPR 3: A review list for plants for which there is inadequate information to assign them to one of the other lists or to reject them.

RPR 4: A watch list for plants that are of limited distribution in California.

Global and Subnational Rankings

Though not associated directly with legal protections, species have been given a conservation status rank by NatureServe, an international non-profit conservation organization that is the leading source for information about

rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. The Ventura County Planning Division considers the following ranks as sensitive for the purposes of CEQA impact assessment (G = Global, S = Subnational or State):

- G1 or S1 - Critically Imperiled
- G2 or S2 – Imperiled
- G3 or S3 - Vulnerable to extirpation or extinction

Locally Important Species

Locally important species' protections are addressed below under "Locally Important Species/Communities Regulations."

For lists of some of the species in Ventura County that are protected by the above regulations, go to http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html.

Migratory Bird Regulations

The Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Code (3503, 3503.5, 3511, 3513 and 3800) protect most native birds. In addition, the federal and state endangered species acts protect some bird species listed as threatened or endangered. Project-related impacts to birds protected by these regulations would normally occur during the breeding season, because unlike adult birds, eggs and chicks are unable to escape impacts.

The MBTA implements various treaties and conventions between the U.S. and Canada, Japan, Mexico, and Russia for the protection of migratory birds, which occur in two of these countries over the course of one year. The Act maintains that it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture or kill; attempt to take, capture or kill; possess, offer to or sell, barter, purchase, deliver or cause to be shipped, exported, imported, transported, carried or received any migratory bird, part, nest, egg or product, manufactured or not. Bird species protected under the provisions of the MBTA are identified by the List of Migratory Birds (Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 10.13 as updated by the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist and published supplements through 1995 by the USFWS).

CDFG Code 3513 upholds the MBTA by prohibiting any take or possession of birds that are designated by the MBTA as migratory nongame birds except as allowed by federal rules and regulations promulgated pursuant to the MBTA. In addition, there are CDFG Codes (3503, 3503.5, 3511, and 3800) which further protect nesting birds and their parts, including passerine birds, raptors, and state "fully protected" birds.

NOTE: These regulations protect almost all *native nesting birds*, not just sensitive status birds.

Plant Community Regulations

Plant communities are provided legal protection when they provide habitat for protected species or when the community is in the coastal zone and qualifies as environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA).

Global and Subnational Rankings

Though not associated directly with legal protections, plant communities have been given a conservation status rank by NatureServe, an international non-profit conservation organization that is the leading source for information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. The Ventura County Planning Division considers the following ranks as sensitive for the purposes of CEQA impact assessment (G = Global, S = Subnational or State):

- G1 or S1 - Critically Imperiled
- G2 or S2 - Imperiled
- G3 or S3 - Vulnerable to extirpation or extinction

CDFG Rare

Rare natural communities are those communities that are of highly limited distribution. These communities may or may not contain rare, threatened, or endangered species. Though the Native Plant Protection Act and the California Endangered Species Act provide no legal protection to plant communities, CDFG considers plant communities that are ranked G1-G3 or S1-S3 (as defined above) to be rare or sensitive, and therefore these plant communities should be addressed during CEQA review.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

The Coastal Act specifically calls for protection of “environmentally sensitive habitat areas” or ESHA, which it defines as: “Any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments” (Section 30107.5).

ESHA has been specifically defined in the Santa Monica Mountains. For ESHA identification in this location, the Coastal Commission, the agency charged with administering the Coastal Act, has described the habitats that are considered ESHA. A memo from a Coastal Commission biologist that describes ESHA in the Santa Monica Mountains can be found at: http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html.

Locally Important Communities

The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines defines a locally important community as one that is considered by qualified biologists to be a quality example characteristic of or unique to the County or region, with this determination being made on a case-by-case basis. The County has not developed a list of locally important communities, but has deemed oak woodlands to be a locally important community through the County’s *Oak Woodland Management Plan*.

Tree Regulations

Selected trees are protected by the Ventura County Tree Protection Ordinance, found in Section 8107-25 of the Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance. This ordinance, which applies in the unincorporated areas of the County outside the coastal zone, regulates—through a tree permit program—the removal, trimming of branches or roots, or grading or excavating within the root zone of a “protected tree.” Individual trees are the focus of the ordinance, while oak woodlands are additionally protected as “locally important communities.”

The ordinance allows removal of five protected trees (only three of which can be oaks or sycamores; none of which can be heritage or historical trees) through a ministerial permit process. Removal of more/other than this may trigger a discretionary tree permit.

If a proposed project cannot avoid impacts to protected trees, mitigation of these impacts (such as replacement of lost trees) is addressed through the tree permit process—**unless the impacts may affect biological resources beyond the tree itself**, such as to sensitive status species that may be using the tree, nesting birds, the tree’s role as part of a larger habitat, etc. These secondary impacts have not been addressed through the tree permit program and must be addressed by the biologist in the biological assessment in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

A tree permit does not, however, substitute as mitigation for impacts to oak woodlands. The Public Resources Code requires that when a county is determining the applicability of CEQA to a project, it must determine whether that project “may result in a conversion of oak woodlands that will have a significant effect on the environment.” If such effects (either individual impacts or cumulative) are identified, the law requires that they be mitigated. Acceptable mitigation measures include, but are not limited to, conservation of other oak woodlands through the use of conservation easements and planting replacement trees, which must be maintained for seven years. In addition, only 50% of the mitigation required for significant impacts to oak woodlands may be fulfilled by replanting oak trees.

The following trees are protected in the specified zones. Girth is measured at 4.5 feet from the midpoint between the uphill and downhill side of the root crown.

PROTECTED TREES			
Common Name/Botanical Name (Genus species)	Girth Standard (Circumference)	Applicable Zones	
		All Base Zones	SRP ₁
Alder (<i>Alnus</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Ash (<i>Fraxinus</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Bay (<i>Umbellularia californica</i>)	9.5 in.		X

Cottonwood (<i>Populus</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Elderberry (<i>Sambucus</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Big Cone Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga macrocarpa</i>)	9.5 in.		X
White Fir (<i>Abies concolor</i>)	9.5 in.		X
Juniper (<i>Juniperus californica</i>)	9.5 in.		X
Maple (<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>)	9.5 in.		X
Oak (Single) (<i>Quercus</i> all species)	9.5 in.	X	X
Oak (Multi) (<i>Quercus</i> all species)	6.25 in.	X	X
Pine (<i>Pinus</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Sycamore (<i>Platanus</i> all species)	9.5 in.	X	X
Walnut (<i>Juglans</i> all species)	9.5 in.		X
Historical Tree ³ (any species)	(any size)	X	X
Heritage Tree ⁴ (any species)	90.0 in.	X	X

X Indicates the zones in which the subject trees are considered protected trees.

1. SRP - Scenic Resource Protection Overlay Zone

2. SHP - Scenic Highway Protection Overlay Zone

3. Any tree or group of trees identified by the County or a city as a landmark, or identified on the Federal or California Historic Resources Inventory to be of historical or cultural significance, or identified as contributing to a site or structure of historical or cultural significance.

4. Any species of tree with a single trunk of 90 or more inches in girth or with multiple trunks, two of which collectively measure 72 inches in girth or more. Species with naturally thin trunks when full grown or naturally large trunks at an early age, or trees with unnaturally enlarged trunks due to injury or disease must be at least 60 feet tall or 75 years old.

Waters and Wetlands Regulations

Numerous agencies control what can and cannot be done in or around streams and wetlands. If a project affects an area where water flows, ponds or is present even part of the year, it is likely to be regulated by one or more agencies. Many wetland or stream projects will require three main permits or approvals (in addition to CEQA compliance). These are:

- 404 Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
- 401 Certification (California Regional Water Quality Control Board)
- Streambed Alteration Agreement (California Department of Fish and Game)

For a more thorough explanation of wetland permitting, see the Ventura County’s “Wetland Project Permitting Guide” at http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html.

404 Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Most projects that involve streams or wetlands will require a 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act is the primary federal program regulating activities in wetlands. The Act regulates areas defined as “waters of the United States.” This includes streams, wetlands in or next to streams, areas influenced by tides, navigable waters, lakes, reservoirs and other impoundments. For nontidal waters, USACE jurisdiction extends up to what is referred to as the “ordinary high water mark” as well as to the landward limits of adjacent Corps-defined wetlands, if present. The ordinary high water mark is an identifiable natural line visible on the bank of a stream or water body that shows the upper limit of typical stream flow or water level. The mark is made from the action of water on the streambank over the course of years.

Permit Triggers: A USACE 404 Permit is triggered by moving (discharging) or placing materials—such as dirt, rock, geotextiles, concrete or culverts—into or within USACE jurisdictional areas. This type of activity is also referred to as a “discharge of dredged or fill material.”

401 Certification (Regional Water Quality Control Board)

If your project requires a USACE 404 Permit, then you will also need a Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) 401 Certification. The federal Clean Water Act, in Section 401, specifies that states must certify that any activity subject to a permit issued by a federal agency, such as the USACE, meets all state water quality standards. In California, the state and regional water boards are responsible for certification of activities subject to USACE Section 404 Permits.

Permit Trigger: A RWQCB 401 Certification is triggered whenever a USACE 404 Permit is required, or whenever an activity could cause a discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. or wetlands.

Streambed Alteration Agreement (California Department of Fish and Game)

If your project includes alteration of the bed, banks or channel of a stream, or the adjacent riparian vegetation, then you may need a Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). The California Fish and Game Code, Sections 1600-1616, regulates activities that would alter the flow, bed, banks, channel or associated riparian areas of a river, stream or lake. The law requires any person, state or local governmental agency or public utility to notify CDFG before beginning an activity that will substantially modify a river, stream or lake.

Permit Triggers: A Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) is triggered when a project involves altering a stream or disturbing riparian vegetation, including any of the following activities:

- Substantially obstructing or diverting the natural flow of a river, stream or lake
- Using any material from these areas
- Disposing of waste where it can move into these areas

Some projects that involve routine maintenance may qualify for long-term maintenance agreements from CDFG. Discuss this option with CDFG staff.

Ventura County General Plan

The Ventura County General Plan contains policies which also strongly protect wetland habitats.

Biological Resources Policy 1.5.2-3 states:

Discretionary development that is proposed to be located within 300 feet of a marsh, small wash, intermittent lake, intermittent stream, spring, or perennial stream (as identified on the latest USGS 7½ minute quad map), shall be evaluated by a County approved biologist for potential impacts on wetland habitats. Discretionary development that would have a significant impact on significant wetland habitats shall be prohibited, unless mitigation measures are adopted that would reduce the impact to a less than significant level; or for lands designated "Urban" or "Existing Community", a statement of overriding considerations is adopted by the decision-making body.

Biological Resources Policy 1.5.2-4 states:

Discretionary development shall be sited a minimum of 100 feet from significant wetland habitats to mitigate the potential impacts on said habitats. Buffer areas may be increased or decreased upon evaluation and recommendation by a qualified biologist and approval by the decision-making body. Factors to be used in determining adjustment of the 100 foot buffer include soil type, slope stability, drainage patterns, presence or absence of endangered, threatened or rare plants or animals, and compatibility of the proposed development with the wildlife use of the wetland habitat area. The requirement of a buffer (setback) shall not preclude the use of replacement as a mitigation when there is no other feasible alternative to allowing a permitted use, and if the replacement results in no net loss of wetland habitat. Such replacement shall be "in kind" (i.e. same type and acreage), and provide wetland habitat of comparable biological value. On-site replacement shall be preferred wherever possible. The replacement plan shall be developed in consultation with California Department of Fish and Game.

Coastal Habitat Regulations

Ventura County's Coastal Area Plan and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, which constitute the "Local Coastal Program" (LCP) for the unincorporated portions of Ventura County's coastal zone, ensure that the County's land

use plans, zoning ordinances, zoning maps, and implemented actions meet the requirements of, and implement the provisions and polices of California's 1976 Coastal Act at the local level.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitats

The Coastal Act specifically calls for protection of "environmentally sensitive habitat areas" or ESHA, which it defines as: "Any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments" (Section 30107.5).

Section 30240 of the Coastal Act states:

- (a) "Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on such resources shall be allowed within such areas."
- (b) "Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade such areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of such habitat areas."

There are three important elements to the definition of ESHA. First, a geographic area can be designated ESHA either because of the presence of individual species of plants or animals or because of the presence of a particular habitat. Second, in order for an area to be designated as ESHA, the species or habitat must be either rare or it must be especially valuable. Finally, the area must be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities.

Protection of ESHA is of particular concern in the southeastern part of Ventura County, where the coastal zone extends inland (~5 miles) to include an extensive area of the Santa Monica Mountains. For ESHA identification in this location, the Coastal Commission, the agency charged with administering the Coastal Act, has described the habitats that are considered ESHA. A memo from a Coastal Commission biologist that describes ESHA in the Santa Monica Mountains can be found at: http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html.

The County's Local Coastal Program outlines other specific protections to environmentally sensitive habitats in the Coastal Zone, such as to wetlands, riparian habitats, dunes, and upland habitats within the Santa Monica Mountains (M Overlay Zone). Protections in some cases are different for different segments of the coastal zone.

Copies of the Coastal Area Plan and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance can be found at: <http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/Programs/local.html>.

Wildlife Migration Regulations

The Ventura County General Plan specifically includes wildlife migration corridors as an element of the region's significant biological resources. In addition, protecting habitat connectivity is critical to the success of special status species and other biological resource protections. Potential project impacts to wildlife migration are analyzed by biologists on a case-by-case basis. The issue involves both a macro-scale analysis—where routes used by large carnivores connecting very large core habitat areas may be impacted—as well as a micro-scale analysis—where a road or stream crossing may impact localized movement by many different animals.

Locally Important Species/Communities Regulations

Locally important species/communities are considered to be significant biological resources in the Ventura County General Plan.

Locally Important Species

The Ventura County General Plan defines a Locally Important Species as a plant or animal species that is not an endangered, threatened, or rare species, but is considered by qualified biologists to be a quality example or unique species within the County and region. The following criteria further define what local qualified biologists have determined to be Locally Important Species:

Locally Important Animal Species Criteria

Taxa for which habitat in Ventura County is crucial for their existence either globally or in Ventura County. This includes:

- Taxa for which the population(s) in Ventura County represents 10 percent or more of the known extant global distribution; or

- Taxa for which there are five or fewer *element occurrences*, or less than 1,000 individuals, or less than 2,000 acres of habitat that sustains populations in Ventura County; or,
- Native taxa that are generally declining throughout their range or are in danger of extirpation in Ventura County.

Locally Important Plant Species Criteria

- Taxa that are declining throughout the extent of their range AND have five (5) or fewer element occurrences in Ventura County.

The County maintains a list of locally important species, which can be found on the Planning Division website at: http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio_resource_review.html. *This list should not be considered comprehensive.* Any species that meets the criteria qualifies as locally important, whether or not it is included on this list.

Locally Important Communities

The Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines defines a locally important community as one that is considered by qualified biologists to be a quality example characteristic of or unique to the County or region, with this determination being made on a case-by-case basis. The County has not developed a list of locally important communities. Oak woodlands have however been deemed by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors to be a locally important community.

The state passed legislation in 2001, the Oak Woodland Conservation Act, to emphasize that oak woodlands are a vital and threatened statewide resource. In response, the County of Ventura prepared and adopted an Oak Woodland Management Plan that recommended, among other things, amending the County's Initial Study Assessment Guidelines to include an explicit reference to oak woodlands as part of its definition of locally important communities. The Board of Supervisors approved this management plan and its recommendations.

Appendix Two

Observed Species Tables

List in the table below the species observed during the survey(s). The most current taxonomy should be used for the scientific names. All taxa should be identified to the fullest extent for those with subspecies/varieties. If the species of an observed plant or animal is not known, indicate the genus and include any comments on the potential species. Include native and non-native species. Organize the list by the following categories: Plants, including nonvascular and vascular; Fungi; and Animals, including invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. You may provide separate tables for plants and animals or add columns for information you determine is important. Use Bold type for special-status species.

Species Observed			
Scientific Name (Species or Genus)	Common Name	Native (1)	Notes (2)
PLANTS			
FUNGI			
ANIMALS			
Invertebrates			
Fish			
Amphibians			
Reptiles			
Birds			
Mammals			

Explanation of Table Fields:

1) Native:

Indicate if species is native or not.

2) Notes:

Any unusual or unique occurrences should be noted. If vouchers were taken, provide the collection number here. Provide any other comments deemed appropriate, for instance, whether the species was heard or seen, or other evidence of the species was observed.

3) Bold:

Species in Bold letters are special-status species. See the Special Status Species summary in Section 3.2 for details.