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July 31, 2020

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Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Jul 31 2020

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Subject: Comments on the Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for Sunnyside Terrace, SCH #2020060534, Los Angeles County

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the above-referenced Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for Sunnyside Terrace (Project).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW's Role

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State [Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subdivision (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, § 15386, subdivision (a)]. CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (Id., § 1802). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect state fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a Responsible Agency under CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381). CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code, including lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.). Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" (see Fish & G. Code, § 2050) of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA; Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) or the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA; Fish & G. Code, §1900 et seq.), CDFW recommends the Project proponent obtain appropriate authorization under the Fish and Game Code.

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Project Location: The Project site is located at 700 N. Sunnyside Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024. The site is along the northern urban fringe of the City of Sierra Madre. It is surrounded to the west, south and southeast by residential development. Immediately east is the Bailey Canyon Wilderness Park. To the north is located the Mater Dolorosa Community.

Project Description/Objectives: The proposed project will develop approximately the lower 20 acres of property with a residential development of 42 detached single-family dwellings, a 3 to 3.5 acre dedicated neighborhood park, and dedication of approximately 45 acres of open space to the City of Sierra Madre.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the City of Sierra Madre (City) in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources.

Specific Comments

- 1) Nesting Birds. Attachment B, Project Configuration and aerial photography, indicate the presence of trees and other vegetation on the Project site and within the vicinity. This vegetation may provide potential nesting habitat where Project activities may impact nesting birds. A review of California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) indicate occurrences of special status bird species, including least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), within 2 miles of the Project vicinity. Project activities occurring during the breeding season of nesting birds could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs, or nestlings, or otherwise lead to nest abandonment in trees directly adjacent to the Project boundary. The Project could also lead to the loss of foraging habitat for sensitive bird species.
 - a) CDFW recommends that measures be taken, primarily, to avoid Project impacts to nesting birds. Migratory nongame native bird species are protected by international treaty under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 50, § 10.13). Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibit take of all birds and their active nests including raptors and other migratory nongame birds (as listed under the Federal MBTA).
 - b) Proposed Project activities including (but not limited to) staging and disturbances to native and nonnative vegetation, structures, and substrates should occur outside of the avian breeding season which generally runs from February 15 through August 31 (as early as January 1 for some raptors) to avoid take of birds or their eggs. If avoidance of the avian breeding season is not feasible, CDFW recommends surveys by a qualified biologist with experience in conducting breeding bird surveys to detect protected native birds occurring in suitable nesting habitat that is to be disturbed and (as access to adjacent areas allows) any other such habitat within 300-feet of the disturbance area (within 500-feet for raptors). Project personnel, including all contractors working on site, should be instructed on the sensitivity of the area. Reductions in the nest buffer distance may be appropriate depending on the avian species involved, ambient levels of human activity, screening vegetation, or possibly other factors.

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- 2) Bumble Bee. A review of CNDDDB indicate three occurrences of Crotch bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) within 5 miles west of the Project vicinity. Project ground disturbing activities may result in crushing or filling of active bee colonies, causing the death or injury of adults, eggs, and larvae. The Project may remove bee habitat by eliminating vegetation that may support essential foraging habitat. Impacts to Crotch's bumble bee could result from ground disturbing activities. Project disturbance activities could result in mortality or injury to hibernating bees, as well as temporary or long-term loss of suitable foraging habitats. Construction during the breeding season of bees could result in the incidental loss of breeding success or otherwise lead to nest abandonment.
 - a) CDFW recommends that measures be taken, primarily, to avoid Project impacts to Crotch bumble bee. On June 12, 2019, the California Fish and Game Commission accepted a petition to list the crotch bumble bee as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act ("CESA"), determining the listing "may be warranted" and advancing the species to the candidacy stage of the CESA listing process.
 - b) CDFW recommends, within one year prior to vegetation removal and/or grading, a qualified entomologist familiar with the species behavior and life history should conduct surveys to determine the presence/absence of Crotch's bumble bee. Surveys should be conducted during flying season when the species is most likely to be detected above ground, between March 1 to September 1 (Thorp et al. 1983). Survey results including negative findings should be submitted to CDFW prior to initiation of Project activities. If "take" or adverse impacts to Crotch's bumble bee cannot be avoided either during Project activities or over the life of the Project, the City must consult CDFW to determine if a CESA incidental take permit is required (pursuant to Fish & Game Code, § 2080 et seq.).
- 3) California Endangered Species Act (CESA). A review of CNDDDB indicates several occurrences within 2 miles of the Project vicinity of least Bell's vireo a CESA-listed species. Project related activities may adversely impact potential habitat for this species. CDFW considers adverse impacts to a species protected by CESA to be significant without mitigation under CEQA. As to CESA, take of any endangered, threatened, candidate species, or State-listed rare plant species that results from the Project is prohibited, except as authorized by state law (Fish and G. Code, §§ 2080, 2085; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §786.9). Consequently, if the Project, Project construction, or any Project-related activity during the life of the Project will result in take of a species designated as endangered or threatened, or a candidate for listing under CESA, CDFW recommends that the Project proponent seek appropriate take authorization under CESA prior to implementing the Project. Appropriate authorization from CDFW may include an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) or a Consistency Determination in certain circumstances, among other options [Fish & G. Code, §§ 2080.1, 2081, subds. (b) and (c)]. Early consultation is encouraged, as significant modification to a Project and mitigation measures may be required in order to obtain a CESA Permit. Revisions to the Fish and Game Code, effective January 1998, may require that CDFW issue a separate CEQA document for the issuance of an ITP unless the Project CEQA document addresses all Project impacts to CESA-listed species and specifies a mitigation monitoring and reporting program that will meet the requirements of an ITP. For these reasons, biological mitigation monitoring and reporting proposals should be of sufficient detail and resolution to satisfy the requirements for a CESA ITP.
- 4) Bat Species. A review of CNDDDB indicates occurrences of several bat species within the

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Project vicinity. These species include, pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*), hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), the pallid and the western mastiff are both California species of special concern. Despite the high diversity and sensitivity of bats in Southern California, numerous bat species are known to roost in trees and structures throughout Los Angeles county. Project activities may have the potential to adversely impact bat populations within the vicinity.

Bats are considered non-game mammals and are afforded protection by state law from take and/or harassment (Fish and Game Code § 4150, California Code of Regulations § 251.1). A DEIR should provide a thorough discussion of potential impacts to bats from construction and operation of the Project to adequately disclose potential impacts and to identify appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures. The CEQA document shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts (CEQA Guidelines §15126.4[a][1]).

- 5) Landscaping. Attachment B, Project Configuration indicate the potential for landscaping, as the future development will be residential and park space. Habitat loss and invasive plants are a leading cause of native biodiversity loss. Invasive plant species spread quickly and can displace native plants, prevent native plant growth, and create monocultures. CDFW recommends using native, locally appropriate plant species for landscaping on the Project site. CDFW recommends invasive/exotic plants, including pepper trees (*Schinus* genus) and fountain grasses (*Pennisetum* genus), be restricted from use in landscape plans for this Project. A list of invasive/exotic plants that should be avoided as well as suggestions for better landscape plants can be found at <https://www.cal-ipc.org/solutions/prevention/landscaping/>.
- 6) Tree Removal: Attachment B, Project Configuration as well as aerial photography indicate the presence of trees in areas of the Project site that will be developed for housing. Habitat loss is one of the leading causes of native biodiversity loss. To compensate for any loss of trees, CDFW recommends replacing all non-native trees removed as a result of the proposed work activities at least a 1:1 ratio with native trees. CDFW recommends replacing native trees at least a 3:1 ratio with a combination of native trees and/or appropriate understory and lower canopy plantings.
 - a) Due to tree removal, Project activities have the potential to result in the spread of tree insect pests and disease into areas not currently exposed to these stressors. This could result in expediting the loss of oaks, alders, sycamore, and other trees in California which support a high biological diversity including special status species. To reduce impacts to less than significant the final environmental document should describe an infectious tree disease management plan and how it will be implemented in order to avoid significant impacts under CEQA. All trees identified for removal resulting from the Project should be inspected for contagious tree diseases including but not limited to: thousand canker fungus (*Geosmithia morbida*), see <http://www.thousandcankers.com/>; Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (*Euwallacea* spp.), see <http://eskalenlab.ucr.edu/avocado.html>); and goldspotted oak borer (*Agilus auroguttatus*), see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74163.html>. To avoid the spread of infectious tree diseases, diseased trees should not be transported from the Project site without first being treated using best available management practices relevant for each tree disease observed.

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- 7) Fuel Modification. According to the County of Los Angeles Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map, the Project site is within Hazard Class 3, which indicates a very high fire hazard area. This may indicate that Project activities may include fuel modification within around the Project boundary. The DEIR should include information as to how the Project or adjacent land may be affected by fuel modification requirements. Fuel modification should not adversely impact resources in areas adjacent or mitigation lands. A discussion of any fuel modification requirements for this Project should be included in the DEIR to allow CDFW to assess potential impacts to biological resources. CDFW recommends all fuel modification requirements be met on the Project, and not in mitigation lands or habitat adjacent to the Project. Habitat being subjected to fuel modification (e.g., thinning, trimming, removal of mulch layer) should be considered an impact to these vegetation communities and mitigated accordingly. CDFW also recommends any irrigation proposed in fuel modification zones drain back into the development and not onto natural habitat land as perennial sources of water allow for the introduction of invasive Argentine ants.

- 8) Human-Wildlife Interface. Due to the location of the Project site just in the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains and at the edge of the black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and mountain lion range (*Puma concolor*), CDFW recommends the City require the use of bear-proof trash cans for this and all new developments in the foothills. Bears or mountain lions spotted in residential, suburban or urban areas should be reported to the South Coast Regional Office (858) 467-4201 or AskR5@wildlife.ca.gov during normal business hours. After-hours or weekend sightings should be reported first to local police or sheriff officers, who often can respond and secure a scene quickly and then contact CDFW as needed.
 - a) CDFW considers improper storage of human food and garbage to be the primary cause of bear conflicts with humans. This requirement is necessary for the local waste management agency to provide each house these special cans. These trash cans require the use of special trucks and must be specifically contracted. The City should require this development, and all individual houses, use bear-proof trash cans.
 - b) Human interactions are one of the main drivers of mortality of mountain lion and increasing development and human presence in this area could increase the need for public safety removal and/or vehicle strikes of mountain lions. The mountain lion is a specially protected mammal in the State of California (Fish and Game Code, § 4800). In addition, on April 21, 2020, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) accepted a petition to list an evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) of mountain lion in southern and central coastal California as threatened CESA. Therefore, any new development project should analyze the potential for mountain lion that are known to occur in the San Gabriel Mountains and their foothills and may be impacted by development and human activity in the Project area.

- 9) Biological Baseline Assessment. Attachment B, Project Configuration as well as aerial photography indicate the majority of the Project site is open space. Undisturbed land may provide suitable habitat for special status or regionally and locally unique species. CDFW recommends providing a complete assessment and impact analysis of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the Project area, with emphasis upon identifying endangered, threatened, sensitive, regionally and locally unique species, and sensitive habitats. Impact analysis will aid in determining any direct, indirect, and cumulative biological impacts, as well as specific mitigation or avoidance measures necessary to offset those impacts, as referred

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in Specific Comment 6 and General Comment 3. CDFW recommends avoiding any sensitive natural communities found on or adjacent to the Project. CDFW also considers impacts to Species of Special Concern a significant direct and cumulative adverse effect without implementing appropriate avoid and/or mitigation measures. The DEIR should include the following information:

- a) Information on the regional setting that is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts, with special emphasis on resources that are rare or unique to the region [CEQA Guidelines, § 15125(c)]. The DEIR should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect Sensitive Natural Communities from Project-related impacts. Project implementation may result in impacts to rare or endangered plants or plant communities that have been recorded adjacent to the Project vicinity. CDFW considers these communities as threatened habitats having both regional and local significance. Plant communities, alliances, and associations with a state-wide ranking of S1, S2, S3 and S4 should be considered sensitive and declining at the local and regional level. These ranks can be obtained by visiting <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities#sensitive%20natural%20communities>;
- b) A thorough, recent, floristic-based assessment of special status plants and natural communities, following CDFW's *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (see <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=18959&inline>);
- c) Floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and vegetation impact assessments conducted at the Project site and within the neighboring vicinity. *The Manual of California Vegetation*, second edition, should also be used to inform this mapping and assessment (Sawyer, 2008). Adjoining habitat areas should be included in this assessment where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts offsite. Habitat mapping at the alliance level will help establish baseline vegetation conditions;
- d) A complete, recent, assessment of the biological resources associated with each habitat type on site and within adjacent areas that could also be affected by the Project. CDFW's CNDDDB in Sacramento should be contacted to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat. CDFW recommends that CNDDDB Field Survey Forms be completed and submitted to CNDDDB to document survey results. Online forms can be obtained and submitted at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>;
- e) A review CNDDDB indicate the occurrence of several special status reptile species within the Project vicinity, these include the southern California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*) and coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*). The DEIR should have a complete, recent, assessment of rare, threatened, and endangered, and other sensitive species on site and within the area of potential effect, including California Species of Special Concern and California Fully Protected Species (Fish & G. Code, §§ 3511, 4700, 5050 and 5515). Species to be addressed should include all those which meet the CEQA definition of endangered, rare or threatened species (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). Seasonal variations in use of the Project area should also be addressed. Focused species-specific surveys, conducted at the appropriate

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time of year and time of day when the sensitive species are active or otherwise identifiable, are required. Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the USFWS; and,

- f) A recent, wildlife and rare plant survey. CDFW generally considers biological field assessments for wildlife to be valid for a one-year period, and assessments for rare plants may be considered valid for a period of up to three years. Some aspects of the proposed Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if build out could occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases.

10) Biological Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts. Due to the proximity of the Project site to undeveloped land and open space just north of the Project site, it is essential to understand how these open spaces and the biological diversity within them may be impacted by Project activities. This should aid in identifying specific mitigation or avoidance measures necessary to offset those impacts. CDFW recommends providing a thorough discussion of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts expected to adversely affect biological resources, with specific measures to offset such impacts. The following should be addressed in the DEIR:

- a) A discussion regarding indirect Project impacts on biological resources, including resources in nearby public lands, open space, adjacent natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, and any designated and/or proposed or existing reserve lands (e.g., preserve lands associated with a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP, Fish & G. Code, § 2800 *et. seq.*). Impacts on, and maintenance of, wildlife corridor/movement areas, including access to undisturbed habitats in adjacent areas, should be fully evaluated in the DEIR;
- b) A discussion of potential adverse impacts from lighting, noise, temporary and permanent human activity, and exotic species and identification of any mitigation measures;
- c) A discussion on Project-related changes on drainage patterns and downstream of the Project site; the volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and, post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site. The discussion should also address the proximity of the extraction activities to the water table, whether dewatering would be necessary and the potential resulting impacts on the habitat (if any) supported by the groundwater. Mitigation measures proposed to alleviate such Project impacts should be included;
- d) An analysis of impacts from land use designations and zoning located nearby or adjacent to natural areas that may inadvertently contribute to wildlife-human interactions. A discussion of possible conflicts and mitigation measures to reduce these conflicts should be included in the DEIR; and,
- e) A cumulative effects analysis, as described under CEQA Guidelines section 15130. General and specific plans, as well as past, present, and anticipated future projects, should be analyzed relative to their impacts on similar plant communities and wildlife habitats.

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11) Wetland Resources. A review of the United States Geological Society (USGS) The National Map indicates the presence of forest/shrub wetlands, located east of the Project site. Given its proximity to the Project site, CDFW is concerned Project activities that may generate dust, noise, or light, for example, may indirectly impact the habitat values of the wetland.

In addition, recent aerial photography indicates a change in the appearance of the southeast corner of the Project site. A depression that may exist on the landscape could be an indication of vernal pools on site. Fish and Game Code states that "wetlands" means lands which may be covered periodically or permanently with shallow water and which include swamps, mudflats, fens, and vernal pools. (Fish & Game Code §2785).

CDFW, as described in Fish and Game Code section 703(a), is guided by the Fish and Game Commission's policies. The Wetlands Resources policy (<https://fgc.ca.gov/About/Policies/Miscellaneous>) of the Fish and Game Commission "...seek[s] to provide for the protection, preservation, restoration, enhancement and expansion of wetland habitat in California. Further, it is the policy of the Fish and Game Commission to strongly discourage development in or conversion of wetlands. It opposes, consistent with its legal authority, any development or conversion that would result in a reduction of wetland acreage or wetland habitat values. To that end, the Commission opposes wetland development proposals unless, at a minimum, Project mitigation assures there will be 'no net loss' of either wetland habitat values or acreage. The Commission strongly prefers mitigation which would achieve expansion of wetland acreage and enhancement of wetland habitat values."

- a) Please see Specific Comment 10 regarding indirect and cumulative impacts.
- b) The Wetlands Resources policy provides a framework for maintaining wetland resources and establishes mitigation guidance. CDFW encourages avoidance of wetland resources as a primary mitigation measure and discourages the development or type conversion of wetlands to uplands. CDFW encourages activities that would avoid the reduction of wetland acreage, function, or habitat values. Once avoidance and minimization measures have been exhausted, the Project must include mitigation measures to assure a "no net loss" of either wetland habitat values, or acreage, for unavoidable impacts to wetland resources. Conversions include, but are not limited to, conversion to subsurface drains, placement of fill or building of structures within the wetland, and channelization or removal of materials from the streambed. All wetlands and watercourses, whether ephemeral, intermittent, or perennial, should be retained and provided with substantial setbacks, which preserve the riparian and aquatic values and functions for the benefit to on-site and off-site wildlife populations. CDFW recommends mitigation measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts be included in the DEIR and these measures should compensate for the loss of function and value.
- c) The Fish and Game Commission's Water policy guides CDFW on the quantity and quality of the waters of this state that should be apportioned and maintained respectively so as to produce and sustain maximum numbers of fish and wildlife; to provide maximum protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitat; encourage and support programs to maintain or restore a high quality of the waters of this state; prevent the degradation thereof caused by pollution and contamination; and, endeavor to keep as much water as possible open and accessible to the public

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for the use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife. CDFW recommends avoidance of water practices and structures that use excessive amounts of water, and minimization of impacts that negatively affect water quality, to the extent feasible (Fish & G. Code, § 5650).

- d) There are very few vernal pools left in Los Angeles County; therefore, the loss of any vernal pool potentially on the Project site is significant to CDFW. Therefore, CDFW recommends the final environmental document include a discussion as to the local significance and distribution of vernal pools regionally. CEQA Guidelines §15125(c) require the City to include information on the regional setting that is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts, with special emphasis placed on analyzing resources that are or unique to the region. CDFW recommends a USFW wet and dry season protocol level survey for Branchiopods on the Project site within suitable habitat. The CEQA document should include the results of all surveys and a discussion on the presence or absence of special status species, avoidance, and mitigation measures.

General Comments

- 1) Jurisdictional Waters. As a Responsible Agency under CEQA, CDFW has authority over activities in streams and/or lakes that will divert or obstruct the natural flow, or change the bed, channel, or bank (including vegetation associated with the stream or lake) of a river or stream, or use material from a streambed. For any such activities, the project applicant (or "entity") must provide written notification to CDFW pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1600 *et seq.*
 - a) CDFW's issuance of an LSA for a project that is subject to CEQA will require CEQA compliance actions by CDFW as a Responsible Agency. As a Responsible Agency, CDFW may consider the Environmental Impact Report of the local jurisdiction (Lead Agency) for the project. To minimize additional requirements by CDFW pursuant to section 1600 *et seq.* and/or under CEQA, the document should fully identify the potential impacts to the stream or riparian resources and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, monitoring and reporting commitments for issuance of the LSA (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA>).
 - b) In the event the project area may support aquatic, riparian, and wetland habitats; a preliminary delineation of the streams and their associated riparian habitats should be included in the DEIR. The delineation should be conducted pursuant to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) wetland definition adopted by CDFW (Cowardin et al. 1970). Be advised that some wetland and riparian habitats subject to CDFW's authority may extend beyond the jurisdictional limits of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Section 404 permit and Regional Water Quality Control Board Section 401 Certification.
 - c) In project areas which may support ephemeral or episodic streams, herbaceous vegetation, woody vegetation, and woodlands also serve to protect the integrity of these resources and help maintain natural sedimentation processes; therefore, CDFW recommends effective setbacks be established to maintain appropriately-sized vegetated buffer areas adjoining ephemeral drainages.
 - d) Project-related changes in upstream and downstream drainage patterns, runoff, and

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sedimentation should be included and evaluated in the DEIR.

- e) As part of the LSA Notification process, CDFW requests a hydrological evaluation of the 100, 50, 25, 10, 5, and 2-year frequency storm event for existing and proposed conditions. CDFW recommends the DEIR evaluate the results and address avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures that may be necessary to reduce potential significant impacts.
- 2) Project Description and Alternatives. To enable CDFW to adequately review and comment on the proposed Project from the standpoint of the protection of plants, fish, and wildlife, we recommend the following information be included in the DEIR:
 - a) A complete discussion of the purpose and need for, and description of, the proposed Project, including all staging areas and access routes to the construction and staging areas; and,
 - b) A range of feasible alternatives to Project component location and design features to ensure that alternatives to the proposed Project are fully considered and evaluated. The alternatives should avoid or otherwise minimize direct and indirect impacts to sensitive biological resources and wildlife movement areas.
 - 3) Compensatory Mitigation. The DEIR should include mitigation measures for adverse Project-related impacts to sensitive plants, animals, and habitats. Mitigation measures should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts. For unavoidable impacts, on-site habitat restoration or enhancement should be discussed in detail. If on-site mitigation is not feasible or would not be biologically viable and therefore not adequately mitigate the loss of biological functions and values, off-site mitigation through habitat creation and/or acquisition and preservation in perpetuity should be addressed. Areas proposed as mitigation lands should be protected in perpetuity with a conservation easement, financial assurance and dedicated to a qualified entity for long-term management and monitoring. Under Government Code section 65967, the Lead Agency must exercise due diligence in reviewing the qualifications of a governmental entity, special district, or nonprofit organization to effectively manage and steward land, water, or natural resources on mitigation lands it approves.
 - 4) Long-term Management of Mitigation Lands. For proposed preservation and/or restoration, the DEIR should include measures to protect the targeted habitat values from direct and indirect negative impacts in perpetuity. The objective should be to offset the Project-induced qualitative and quantitative losses of wildlife habitat values. Issues that should be addressed include (but are not limited to) restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, and increased human intrusion. An appropriate non-wasting endowment should be set aside to provide for long-term management of mitigation lands.
 - 5) Translocation/Salvage of Plants and Animal Species. Translocation and transplantation is the process of moving an individual from the Project site and permanently moving it to a new location. CDFW generally does not support the use of, translocation or transplantation as the primary mitigation strategy for unavoidable impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species. Studies have shown that these efforts are experimental and the outcome unreliable. CDFW has found that permanent preservation and management of

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habitat capable of supporting these species is often a more effective long-term strategy for conserving sensitive plants and animals and their habitats.

- 6) Moving out of Harm's Way. The proposed Project is anticipated to result in clearing of habitats that support many species of indigenous wildlife. To avoid direct mortality, we recommend that a qualified biological monitor approved by CDFW be on-site prior to and during ground and habitat disturbing activities to move out of harm's way special status species or other wildlife of low mobility that would be injured or killed by grubbing or Project-related construction activities. It should be noted that the temporary relocation of on-site wildlife does not constitute effective mitigation for the purposes of offsetting Project impacts associated with habitat loss. If the Project requires species to be removed, disturbed, or otherwise handled, we recommend that the DEIR clearly identify that the designated entity should obtain all appropriate state and federal permits.

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NOP to assist the City of Sierra Madre in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources. If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please contact Felicia Silva, Environmental Scientist, at (562) 430-0098 or by email at Felicia.Silva@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Erinn Wilson-Olgin
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Erinn Wilson
Environmental Program Manager I

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CEQA Program Coordinator – Sacramento

State Clearinghouse

References

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