
Appendix N-4

Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory
Committee Draft Meeting Minutes

DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting Date: June 3, 2024 – Monday

Time: 1:00 PM

To be approved by SEATAC at a future meeting

SEATAC MEMBERS

Cassy Aoyagi
Ty Garrison
Wendy Katagi, Ph.D
Iris Chi (Alternate)

LA COUNTY PLANNING STAFF

Joe Decruyenaere, Senior Biologist
Cameron Robertson, SEATAC Coordinator
Joshua Huntington, Supervising Planner
Erica G. Aguirre, Principal Planner

PART I – PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Roll Call – Aoyagi, Garrison, Katagi, and Chi all present in person.
2. Coordinator’s report – None.

PART II – MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

3. Motion to approve the March 4, 2024 minutes by Aoyagi, seconded by Chi— approved.

PART III – OLD BUSINESS

4. None.

PART IV – NEW BUSINESS

5. PROJECT: Trails at Lyons Canyon
Project No.: 2021-001195
Permit Nos.: Vesting Tentative Tract Map (VTTM) No. 83301 (RPPL2021003061), Administrative Housing Permit No. RPPL2021003105, Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. RPPL2021003113, Oak Tree Permit (OTP) No. RPPL2021003070, Environmental Assessment No. RPPL2021003071
APNs: 2826-022-026, -027, -035; 2826-023-014; 2826-041-039
LOCATION: West of The Old Road, between (south of) Sagecrest Circle and (north of) the Rivendale Park and Open Space ("RPOS"), Santa Clarita
SEA: Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA
USGS QUAD: Oat Mountain
APPLICANT: New Urban West (NUWI-Lyons Canyon, LLC)

DRAFT SEATAC MINUTES
JUNE 3, 2024

BIOLOGIST: Michael Cady
DRP PLANNER: Erica G. Aguirre
DRP BIOLOGIST: Joseph Decruyenaere

Project Description: The application is a request to subdivide five existing parcels that are 233.49 gross acres (“Project Site”) and create 37 lots including 510 residential dwelling units including an affordable housing component, a recreational center, and trails (“Project”) within the unincorporated community of Santa Clarita Valley, and within the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area (the “SSM/SH SEA”). The Project utilizes a clustering approach, which is recommended by the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, and includes both for-sale and senior affordable housing. The proposed onsite project development footprint is approximately 75.04 acres (“Project Development Footprint”), this includes the onsite and offsite grading limits and the construction buffers. Inclusive of fuel modification and debris extents, the total project impact area is approximately 89.35 acres (“Total Project Impact Area”). The request includes a Vesting Tentative Tract Map as well as an SEA CUP, a CUP for grading, an Oak Tree Permit, a Housing Permit, etc. As a part of the SEA CUP, the Project will preserve 150.31 onsite acres of natural open space. This will not be impacted by the Project (i.e. it does not include the Project Development Footprint, debris extents, or fuel modification zones). The Project also proposes the offsite dedication of over 466.70 gross acres of natural open space within six offsite parcels as potential mitigation. (See Table 28 of the Biota Report, April 2024.) Together, the onsite and offsite conservation areas total approximately 617.01 acres (“Conservation Area”). When excluding developed areas, which includes existing dirt access roads and trails, this is 614.40 acres.

Staff presentations:

Planner Erica G. Aguirre and Biologist Joe Decruyenaere presented a description of the proposed project, discussion of impacts from the proposed project, and recommendations to bring the project in closer alignment with the required findings of the SEA Ordinance. Recommendations included the following:

- A reduced development footprint design that minimizes impacts should be presented as an alternative in the project draft environmental impact report.
- The mitigation measure for impacts to the Crotch bumblebee should be strengthened to explicitly require an incidental take permit from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).
- Staff recommends that SEATAC make a recommendation of consistent after modification to further reduce the development footprint resulting in greater conformity between the proposed project and the significant SEA habitat (SRC 1 – 4).

SEATAC Comments:

- **Movement**
 - Work with CDFW to incorporate any relevant aspects of the Newhall Pass wildlife connectivity project into the proposed Project design. Also, consult with the Resource Conservation District (RCD) concerning their efforts in the Newhall Pass area.
 - Consult with mountain lion experts to determine the best configuration for mountain lion movement through undeveloped portions of the site.
 - Incorporate permeable fencing where wildlife movement is desired and incorporate impermeable fencing in select areas to minimize conflicts between people and wildlife.
- **Wildlife**
 - Add condor activity tracking data in the area to the Biota Report and contact CDFW to consult on impacts to the condor population and add mitigation measures to address impacts, if necessary.
 - Expand the analysis of impacts to the nearby bat colony to include seasonality of use. Add mitigation measures to avoid impacts during construction.
 - In order to minimize conflicts with nesting birds, general vegetation removal should occur outside of the bird nesting season. Pre-construction nesting surveys can then be conducted along the periphery immediately prior to construction.
 - Provide an all-inclusive compendium of plant and wildlife species observed from all prior reports for the property.
- **Vegetation**
 - The Biota Report states the project is outside the range of San Fernando spineflower; however, there are reported San Fernando spineflower occurrences not far from the development area. Acknowledge the potential for San Fernando spineflower to be present on site in the draft environmental impact report (DEIR) due to its known presence nearby.
 - Emphasize native plants and trees in the landscape plan.
 - Work with wildlife agencies to develop metrics or targets for habitat connectivity in the debris basins so that biological diversity may be maintained.
 - A monitoring and management plan is needed to describe how the open space will be managed. It should identify responsible parties, describe the funding of the program, and should ensure that woodlands are monitored in perpetuity and not just through the 7-year monitoring period for woodland restoration.
- Although the project proposes several good mitigation measures, it is still development and should be reduced to lessen overall impacts. SEATAC agrees that a reduced project design should be included in the DEIR project alternatives.

SEATAC Motions:

Adequacy of Biota Report

We recommend that the Biological Report, as a section of the DEIR, include:

- 1) additional [CDFW/RCD] Newhall Pass wildlife corridor working group information;
- 2) permanent conservation easement measures to combat invasive species in the oaks and walnut woodland;
- 3) all the species noted in the previous biological studies and if any are noted that require additional coordination with the agencies, that initial coordination take place based on those previous studies;
- 4) initial coordination take place regarding the condor with Fish and Wildlife Service, and any flyovers for landing sites in the vicinity of or over the project site be mapped in the DEIR;
- 5) additional analysis of the bat colony that is nearby, of whether or not construction is likely to impact the bat colony, and if so, discussion of mitigation of impacts; and
- 6) an overall list of monitoring and maintenance requirements for each of the open space areas be included in the draft biological report in the DEIR.

Motion/second by Garrison/Katagi

Vote: Aye, unanimous.

Determination of Consistency:

The project is consistent with the SEA Ordinance as modified, based on [the DRP Biologist's] biological recommendations presented at the beginning of the meeting and the recommendation on the adequacy of the biota report in the aforementioned motion.

Motion/second by Garrison/Chi

Vote: Aye, unanimous.

PART V – PUBLIC COMMENT

6. **Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code:**
There was no public comment.

PART VI – ADJOURNMENT

7. Adjournment to 1:00 pm, July 1, 2024.

MEETING MATERIALS: The agenda package is accessible on the Department's website at <https://planning.lacounty.gov/agenda/seatac>. Any meeting-related writings or documents provided to a majority of the SEATAC after distribution of the agenda package, unless exempt from disclosure pursuant to California law, are available online or retained as noted above.

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