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September 3, 2014

Denise Enea DEnea@woodsidefire.org
738 La Loma Ct.
Redwood City, CA 94062

Subject: APN 051-022-310 (vacant) – Mueller, O’Neill

Dear Denise:

At your request I made a site review of work currently being done on the subject site for the purpose of commenting on potential effects on stability of the site and protection of your house.

The vacant lot had at one time a residence, with concrete foundation remnants being visible at this time. There is a significant spring or water seep which traverses the rear of the lot, northwest to southeast, and discharges a steady stream of water to Los Cerros Road even at this point in the summer dry season. The vegetation near the spring and area below the spring is typical of wetland growth (reeds, etc.). Anecdotally, I built and lived in the house at 18 Los Cerros across the street (currently owned by Keith Ohlfs) and to my personal knowledge the spring discharge is year-round. According to Balance Hydrologics, Inc. (letter 4-16-14) there have been four documented landslides on the site since 1950 and the most recent one in 1982 destroyed the house noted above. There is very visible evidence of past landslides in the form of misshapen earth surfaces. Additionally there was a very significant landslide several years ago on the opposite side of Los Cerros which was probably triggered by a broken water line below the site but was probably exacerbated by the constant saturated condition of soils below the spring.

You have indicated that a party with the apparent permission of the property owners has been working on the site in anticipation of either development or marketing. I observed today that the vegetation on the site had been mostly removed and such clearing is continuing, which is problematic given the need for root systems to help maintain a fragile ground surface and for transpiration to help remove subsurface water from the hillside. You indicated the party mentioned above described plans to place fill soil over the exposed slope, presumably to smooth out the irregular land form.

I urge you to alert the property owner immediately to the desirability of halting work on the lot until engineering plans are prepared and a thorough investigation of the site and plans is made by the County Geologist and Engineering Department. The removal of vegetation going into the rainy season causes concern, and placement of fill soil over a wet subgrade would be physically problematic as well as prohibited by the County, which requires a reviewable plan and permit for ANY earthwork on slopes exceeding 20% slope. Such work would immediately trigger a County Code Violation (red tag). In my opinion the current work and any additional efforts without such County review is putting your property as well as the Ohlfs property at risk, with presumably the property owner (Mueller and O’Neill) being considered responsible for that risk.



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Additionally, you should be aware that in my professional opinion it is very unlikely that a septic system can be successfully designed and installed which meets the County requirements, including the required 50' separation in any direction from any slope exceeding 50% grade. You may want to suggest to the owner that he contact Greg Smith at San Mateo County Environmental Health for an explanation of implications of those requirements regarding this site. In addition, it would appear that the disturbance of a visible wetland area may have already triggered conflict with state and federal biologic restrictions. Should that be the case a biologic survey may be required by those agencies with possible restoration planting.

Please contact me with any questions.

Very truly yours,

Jeffrey C. Lea
Principal



Copy: Keith Ohlfs keith@ohlfs.com