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December 13, 2023

Dan Duncan
City of Santa Clarita
Public Works Department
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dduncan@santa-clarita.com

SUBJECT: VIA PRINCESSA PARK PROJECT (PROJECT), MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (MND), SCH #2023110299

Dear Dan Duncan:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the above-referenced MND for the Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.

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, CDFW appreciates 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 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, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (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 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. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's 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" as defined by State law 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.), the Project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: City of Santa Clarita (City)

Objective: One purpose of the Project is to implement the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Update (August 2008), which identified the proposed Via Princessa Park as a possible future park to provide needed recreational facilities to the community. Additionally, the Project has been identified by the Santa Clarita Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency as an optimal location for off-stream recharge, and the proposed infiltration basin will help the Agency meet their goals of sustainable basin management, in accordance with their 2020 Urban Water Management Plan.

The Project consists of the following major elements:

Via Princessa Park: The Project proposes to construct and operate Via Princessa Park on an approximately 34-acre area of primarily vacant City-owned land. Primary elements of the Project include construction of athletic fields, playground equipment, recreational facilities, restrooms, and a restricted-access pedestrian and vehicle railroad undercrossing; building improvements; parking improvements; landscaping; installation of a culvert under the railroad; and restoration of the existing Honby drainage channel.

Additionally, a fourth lane may be added to Weyerhauser Way, and modifications may be made to Via Princessa road to accommodate a double-left turn lane into and/or out of Weyerhauser Way.

Soil Cement Bank Stabilization: The Project proposes improvements along the south bank of the Santa Clara River consisting of soil cement bank protection. The uppermost layer of soil cement will be 20-feet wide and will provide a uniform, stable surface on which to install the park's 20-foot-wide trail. A small portion of the soil cement will be covered in loose rock (riprap), as opposed to soil, at the tie-in points with the existing Cordova Estates Levee and proposed Honby Channel culvert extension. The soil backfill will be contoured to reproduce the streambank and transition into the streambed.

Honby Channel: The Project will remove the sediment and vegetation in the portion of Honby Channel that has experienced an accumulation of sediment to re-establish the original designed channel grade and capacity. Upon completion of this work and re-grading, the existing buried grouted riprap culvert outlet structure will be removed, and the proposed box culvert extension and adjacent exposed grouted riprap bank protection will be constructed. The channel restoration will include replanting with local native species to re-establish local native plants and replace habitat. The restoration effort will include

propagating local native plant cuttings and managing interim conditions during establishment, including providing temporary fencing, control of grazing wildlife (if needed), repair of damage to the temporary irrigation system caused by wildlife, and management of non-native species.

Infiltration Facility: An infiltration facility will be installed to capture and divert storm runoff away from Honby Channel.

Location: The proposed Project is located along Via Princessa (road) northeast of the intersection of Whites Canyon Road and Via Princessa. The Project site comprises an approximately 34-acre area of City-owned land consisting of 5 parcels (assessor's parcel numbers 2836-002-907, 2836-002-922, 2864-003-923, 2864-003-920, and 2864-003-922) along the south bank of the Santa Clara River.

Biological Setting: The Project site was historically used for agricultural production and presently is primarily vacant, with existing improvements constructed on the southerly portion of the property that include the Via Princessa Metrolink Station and railroad operation, an existing restroom and office building, and an existing parking lot (approximately 400 spaces). The Project site is directly bordered by the Santa Clara River to the north. The Santa Clara River is one of the largest natural river systems in southern California remaining in a relatively undeveloped state; it is a braided stream that flows westerly for approximately 84 miles, winding through Los Angeles and Ventura counties to its outlet into the Pacific Ocean. The Santa Clara River is a regional wildlife movement corridor.

The stretch of the Santa Clara River adjacent to the Project site is generally dry, but at other locations along its length the river provides habitat for sensitive fish and amphibians, including arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*; California Species of Special Concern (SSC)), Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*; Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed threatened species), unarmored threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*; ESA and CESA listed endangered, State Fully Protected Species), arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*; ESA listed endangered species, SSC), and western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*; SSC).

Sensitive wildlife species determined to have a low potential to occur on the Project site include California glossy snake (*Arizona elegans occidentalis*; SSC), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*; SSC), southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*; SSC), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*; CESA listed threatened; foraging only), western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*; SSC; foraging only), and western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*; SSC).

Sensitive wildlife species determined to have a moderate potential to occur on the Project site include California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*; SSC), coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*; SSC), coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*; SSC),

loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*; SSC), and white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*; State Fully Protected Species).

Suitable habitat was identified within the Project site for Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*; CESA candidate endangered), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*; SSC), and least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*; ESA and CESA listed endangered). Protocol surveys for Crotch's bumble bee, burrowing owl, and least Bell's vireo were conducted in 2023. No Crotch's bumble bee, burrowing owl, or least Bell's vireo were detected.

Vegetation communities that will be impacted by Project activities are summarized in Table 3 of the Biological Technical Report (below):

Table 3
VEGETATION AND LAND USE IMPACTS

Habitat Type	Existing (acres)	Permanent Impacts (acres)	Temporary Impacts (acres)
Big Sagebrush (CaCode[1] 35.110.02)	0.63	0.31	0.07
Black Locust Groves (CaCode 79.100.04)	0.07	0.07	0.00
Developed (O[2] 12000)	9.52	0.17	6.00
Disturbed (O 11300)	6.17	3.83	0.63
Disturbed (O 1130)/California Buckwheat Scrub (CaCode 32.040.02)	0.20	0.20	0.00
Fremont Cottonwood Forest and Woodland (CaCode 61.130.06)[3]	0.46	0.26	0.20
Mule Fat Thickets (CaCode 63.510.01)	0.42	0.01	0.13
Riverwash (N/A[4])	0.98	0.03	0.95
Scale Broom Scrub (CaCode 32.070.00)[3]	1.52	0.18	1.34
Scale Broom Scrub CaCode 32.070.00[3]/Upland Mustard Fields (CaCode 42.011.05)	0.69	0.63	0.06
Upland Mustard Fields (CaCode 42.011.05)	15.21	12.85	1.35
Upland Mustard Fields CaCode 42.011.05/Rubber Rabbitbrush Scrub (CaCode 45.455.01)	1.49	1.17	0.26
Yerba Santa Scrub (CaCode 37.090.01)	0.41	0.41	0.00
TOTAL	**37.77**	**20.12**	**10.99**

[1] CDFW CaCodes.
[2] Oberbauer Element Code.
[3] Sensitive habitats pursuant to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Communities List (2023c).
[4] Not included in the Manual of California Vegetation or Oberbauer.

Three of these communities, Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland, scale broom scrub, and scale broom scrub/upland mustard fields, are considered sensitive vegetation communities pursuant to the CDFW Natural Communities List.

Sensitive plant species with a potential to occur within the Project site include Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*; ESA and CESA listed endangered), slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*; ESA and CESA listed endangered), and white rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*; California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 2B.2).

Rare plant surveys were conducted April 24, 2023, and July 18,2023, in accordance with published agency guidelines. Nevin's barberry, slender-horned spineflower, and white rabbit-tobacco were not observed.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

COMMENT #1: Crotch's Bumble Bee

Issue: The Project will impact suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble bee, a candidate species for CESA listing. The proposed mitigation measures in the MND are insufficient to reduce the impact to Crotch's bumble bee to a less than significant level.

Specific impact: The Project may result in temporal or permanent loss of suitable nesting and foraging habitat of Crotch's bumble bee. Project ground disturbing activities may cause death or injury of adults, eggs, and larvae; burrow collapse; and reduced nest success.

Why impact would occur: Focused surveys were conducted for Crotch's bumble bee, and they were not detected within the Project site. As with any flying species, Crotch's bumble bee may fly throughout the City and utilize areas that have suitable nesting habitat and floral resources. The Biological Technical Report (HELIX 2023) lists a total of 103 plant species that were detected within the Project site, and the vegetation identified on the Project site has the potential to provide suitable foraging habitat for this species. Crotch's bumble bee primarily nest in late February through late September underground in abandoned small mammal burrows but may also nest under perennial bunch grasses or thatched annual grasses, under brush piles, in old bird nests, and in dead trees or hollow logs (Williams et al. 2014; Hatfield et al. 2012). Overwintering sites utilized by Crotch's bumble bee mated queens include soft, disturbed soil (Goulson 2010), or under leaf litter or other debris (Williams et al. 2014). Ground disturbance and vegetation removal associated with Project implementation during the breeding season could result in the incidental loss of breeding success or otherwise lead to nest abandonment in areas adjacent to the Project site. Habitat loss resulting from Project activities will contribute to a cumulative decrease of foraging habitat for this species, as urban development continues to eliminate tracts of native vegetation.

Evidence impacts would be significant: The California Fish and Game Commission accepted a petition to list the Crotch's bumble bee as endangered under CESA,

determining the listing "may be warranted" and advancing the species to the candidacy stage of the CESA-listing process. The Project may substantially reduce and adversely modify habitat as well as reduce and potentially impair the viability of populations of Crotch's bumble bee. The Project may also reduce the number and range of the species without considering the likelihood that special status species on adjacent and nearby natural lands may rely upon the habitat that occurs on the Project site. In addition, Crotch's bumble bee has a State ranking of S1/S2. This means that the Crotch's bumble bee is considered critically imperiled or imperiled and is extremely rare. Lastly, Crotch's bumble bee is listed as an invertebrate of conservation priority under the California Terrestrial and Vernal Pool Invertebrates of Conservation Priority (CDFW 2017).

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

The City has proposed Mitigation Measure BIO-3 to reduce potentially significant impacts to Crotch's bumble bee. The Measure indicates that it will only apply if Crotch's bumble bee remains a candidate or is listed as a state endangered species at the time of Project construction. The Measure calls for pre-construction surveys if work will occur during the flight season; if Crotch's bumble bees are detected, the Measure requires CESA-required consultation with CDFW and compensatory mitigation at a minimum ratio of 1:1.

Recommendation #1

CDFW recommends the City revise Mitigation Measure BIO-3 such that it applies regardless of the listing status of the Crotch's bumble bee, and that CESA compliance and compensatory mitigation is not dependent upon the results of pre-construction surveys. CDFW recommends the following revisions, indicated by ~~strikeout~~.

> Mitigation Measure BIO-3:
>
> Crotch's Bumble Bee. ~~This mitigation measure shall only be required if Crotch's bumble bee remains as a candidate state endangered species or is listed as a state endangered species at the time of project construction. If Crotch's bumble bee is delisted, this mitigation measure shall not be required.~~
>
> Due to the presence of suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble within the Project site, the following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential impacts to this species:
>
> Pre-construction Survey: To the extent feasible, construction activities (i.e., demolition, earthwork, clearing, and grubbing) shall occur outside of the Crotch's bee flight season (February 1 through October 31). If construction activities must occur during the flight season, a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for Crotch's bumble bee queens, gynes, and colonies. The survey shall be conducted no more than 14 days prior to construction during optimal weather conditions (e.g., warm, sunny days

between 65- and 90-degrees Fahrenheit). ~~If the preconstruction survey is negative, no further assessment shall be required, and construction activities shall be allowed to proceed without any further requirements. If Crotch's bumble bee is detected during the pre-construction survey, the measures below shall be implemented.~~

CESA Compliance: Prior to issuance of a grading permit, it shall be demonstrated that CESA-required consultation with CDFW regarding the project's effects to Crotch's bumble bee has occurred, and, if take of Crotch's bumble bee is expected, that CDFW has authorized such take through an incidental take permit, as applicable. In addition, if an incidental take permit is issued for the project that covers Crotch's bumble bee, that document shall supersede any inconsistent measures provided in this report.

Compensatory Mitigation: Compensatory mitigation for permanent direct impacts to suitable Crotch's bumble bee habitat shall be offset through compensatory mitigation, which may include, but is not necessarily limited to, on-site or off-site habitat preservation, enhancement, restoration, and/or creation at a ratio of no less than 1:1. However, if an incidental take permit is issued for the project that covers Crotch's bumble bee, that document(s) shall supersede any measures and mitigation ratios provided in this report.

COMMENT #2: Special Status Reptiles

Issue: Based on the presence of suitable habitat on the Project site, as indicated in the Biological Technical Report (HELIX 2023), multiple Species of Special Concern (SSC) including coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), and Southern California legless lizard (*Anniella stebbinsi*) have a moderate potential to occur and be impacted by Project activities.

The City proposes that Mitigation Measure BIO-2, requiring pre-construction surveys and relocation by a qualified biologist, would reduce potential impacts to the California legless lizard to a less than significant level. The City states that the other reptile species are highly mobile, and if present during Project activities, would be expected to disperse to areas outside of the Project footprint, such as the Santa Clara River. The City further states that the displacement or loss of a few individuals, if present, would not be expected to reduce regional population numbers; therefore, no mitigation is warranted for these species.

Specific impact: Project ground disturbing activities such as grading and grubbing may result in habitat destruction, causing the death or injury of adults, juveniles, eggs, or hatchlings. In addition, the Project may remove habitat by eliminating native vegetation that may support essential foraging and breeding habitat.

Why impact would occur: The vegetation present in and adjacent to the Project site may provide cover and habitat for wildlife, especially small reptiles. Project implementation includes activities that may result in direct mortality, population declines, or local extirpation of Special Status reptile species. Individuals may be trapped or crushed under structures. Large equipment, equipment and material staging, and vehicle and foot traffic could trample or bury wildlife. These reptiles are cryptic species that often evade threats from predators by remaining still and blending into the surrounding landscape.

Evidence impact would be significant: A California Species of Special Concern is a species, subspecies, or distinct population of an animal native to California that currently satisfies one or more of the following (not necessarily mutually exclusive) criteria:

1) If the species is extirpated from the State or, in the case of birds, is extirpated in its primary season or breeding role.
2) If the species is listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but not CESA-threatened or endangered;
3) If the species meets the State definition of threatened or endangered but has not formally been listed;
4) If the species is experiencing, or formerly experienced, serious (noncyclical) population declines or range retractions (not reversed) that, if continued or resumed, could qualify it for State threatened or endangered status; and/or
5) If natural small populations exhibiting high susceptibility to risk from any factor(s), that if realized, could lead to declines that would qualify it for CESA-threatened or endangered status.

CEQA provides protection not only for CESA-listed species, but for any species including but not limited to SSC that can be shown to meet the criteria for State listing. These SSC meet the CEQA definition of rare, threatened, or endangered species (CEQA Guidelines, § 15380). The MND does not provide adequate mitigation for potential impacts on SSC.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #2

While pre-construction surveys and re-location of encountered California legless lizards may prevent injury or mortality to those individuals, the measure provides no compensation for the loss of habitat for future generations of California legless lizard, and provides no mitigation for the coast horned lizard or coastal whiptail. CDFW recommends that compensatory mitigation of suitable habitat at a mitigation-to-impact ratio equal to or greater than 2:1 be provided to offset loss of habitat for these species.

COMMENT #3: Special Status Bats

Issue: Based on the presence of suitable habitat on the Project site, as indicated in the Biological Technical Report (HELIX 2023), the pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) and western yellow bat have a potential to occur within the Project site.

The City proposes that Mitigation Measure BIO-1, requiring pre-construction surveys to be conducted if Project construction activities occur during the maternity roosting season and requiring additional avoidance and mitigation measures if maternity roosts are identified, would reduce potential impacts to the pallid bat and western yellow bat to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1, as currently written, does not adequately reduce the potentially significant impacts to bats to a less than significant level. While it provides requirements to avoid impacts to maternity roosts, it does not provide the same protections to hibernacula. The requirements for avoidance of hibernacula only occur if maternity roosts are identified during the pre-construction surveys, which are only required if work will be conducted March 1 through September 30.

Specific impact: Hibernating bats may be disturbed, injured, or killed by construction activities affecting their roost site.

Why impact would occur: During the cold winter months, when food resources are low, bats undergo prolonged periods of torpor or hibernation to conserve energy. Bats use a substantial amount of their stored energy in waking from states of torpor or hibernation. Disturbances during hibernation can result in a bat waking more times than it has the energy to accommodate. Surveys conducted during the maternity season would not detect hibernating bats.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #3

CDFW recommends the City revise Mitigation Measure BIO-1 to clarify that the provisions related to night roosts and hibernacula will be implemented whether maternity roosts are present or not. CDFW recommends the following revisions, indicated by ~~strikeout~~.

> Mitigation Measure BIO-1:
>
> *Sensitive Bat Species.* Due to the presence of potentially suitable habitat (i.e., bridge, culvert crossing, trees) for sensitive bat species, the following avoidance and minimization measures shall be implemented to avoid potential impacts to these species:
>
> *Pre-construction Survey:* A qualified biologist experienced with bats shall conduct a preconstruction survey within all suitable habitat on the project site to determine whether occupied hibernacula, night roosts, and/or maternity roosts occur within the project site. The preconstruction survey shall be conducted within 30 days prior to commencing construction activities (i.e., earthwork, clearing, grubbing, and fuel modification [including off-site fuel modification on private property]) and shall consist of two separate surveys conducted no more than a week apart. The second and

final survey shall be conducted no more than seven days prior to commencing construction activities. The pre-construction surveys shall be conducted using a detector for echolocation calls, such as an Anabat bat detector system. The results of the pre-construction survey shall be documented by the qualified biologist. If the qualified biologist determines that no sensitive bat ~~maternity~~ roosts are present, the activities shall be allowed to proceed without any further requirements.

If the qualified biologist determines that big free-tailed bat, pallid bat, and/or western yellow bat ~~maternity~~ roosts are present, the following avoidance and minimization measures shall be implemented:

Maternity Roosts: If occupied maternity roost(s) are identified during the pre-construction survey, no construction activities shall occur within 500 feet during the maternity roosting season (March 1 through September 30) or until a qualified bat biologist determines the roost is no longer active. A qualified biologist shall clearly delineate the 500-foot no work buffer(s), which shall be clearly marked with flags and/or fencing prior to the initiation of construction activities.

Night Roosts and Hibernacula: To the extent feasible, no construction activities shall occur within 500 feet of active night roosts and/or hibernacula. The 500-foot no work buffer shall be left in place until project construction is completed or until a qualified bat biologist determines the roost/hibernaculum is no longer active. No project construction shall occur between 1.5 hours before sunset and 1.5 hours after sunrise. If avoidance of active night roosts and/or hibernacula is not feasible, the qualified biologist shall prepare a Bat Roost Relocation Plan to remove active night roosts/hibernacula and construct alternative bat roost outside of the work area. The Relocation Plan shall be submitted to CDFW for review prior to construction activities. The qualified biologist shall implement the Relocation Plan and new roost sites shall be constructed before the commencement of any project construction (i.e., earthwork, clearing, grubbing, and fuel modification [including off-site fuel modification on private property]). Removal of roosts will be guided by accepted exclusion and deterrent techniques.

COMMENT #4: Edge Effects

Issue: The proposed Project will construct a park with landscape and turf areas and artificial night lighting adjacent to the Santa Clara River, a natural habitat area and regional wildlife movement corridor. The City's MND does not discuss the maintenance activities proposed for the park (e.g., irrigation, use of herbicides or other pesticides, addition of nutrients), and the lighting plan included with the circulated document consists of a single figure with the proposed location and type for each light fixture. CDFW is unable to

evaluate the potential of landscape maintenance and lighting to affect wildlife using the Santa Clara River for movement, foraging, or shelter.

Specific impact: Landscape and turf maintenance practices can involve the use of chemicals that, if they were to enter the river corridor, would be deleterious to native plants and wildlife. The use of rodenticides can cause secondary mortality to predators that eat the target animal. Artificial night lighting can affect plants and wildlife through attraction and disorientation, loss of connectivity, interference with pollination and foraging, and disruption of circadian rhythms and lunar and seasonal cycles. (Barrientos et al 2023).

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Recommendation #4

CDFW recommends the City prepare a landscape and turf maintenance plan that discusses, at a minimum, location, type, and timing of irrigation, the use of fertilizers and methods to prevent contaminated runoff entering the stream, and the use of herbicides and other pesticides and methods to prevent adverse effects on native plants and animals. CDFW further recommends the City prohibit the use of rodenticides. The plan should be provided to CDFW for review and comment.

Recommendation #5

Methods for minimizing adverse effects of artificial night lighting include lighting only where light is necessary, turning lights off when they are not in use (e.g., motion detector), only using as much light as is needed, directing the light only where it is needed, and using the lowest possible correlated color temperature for the goal of the lighting. CDFW recommends the City prepare a more detailed lighting plan that discusses, at a minimum, the criteria used by the City in selecting the various types of lighting fixtures, a schedule detailing the hours the various lights will be on, and steps taken by the City to minimize adverse effects. Examples of best management practices and ordinances can be found at Lighting ordinances | DarkSky International. The lighting plan should be provided to CDFW for review and comment.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). Instructions for submittal are available online at https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB. Additionally, information on special status native plant populations and sensitive natural communities should be submitted to CDFW's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program. Instructions for submittal are available online at https://wildlife.ca.gov/Data/VegCAMP/Natural-Communities/Submit

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist the City in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Kelly Fisher, Environmental Scientist, at (858) 354-5083 or Kelly.Fisher@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
David Mayer
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REFERENCES

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Attachment A:

CDFW Draft Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan and Associated Recommendations

Recommendation	Mitigation Measures	Timing	Responsible Party
Rec. 1	CDFW recommends the City revise Mitigation Measure BIO-3 such that it applies regardless of the listing status of the Crotch's bumble bee, and that CESA compliance and compensatory mitigation is not dependent upon the results of pre-construction surveys. CDFW recommends the following revisions, indicated by ~~strikeout~~. <u>Mitigation Measure BIO-3:</u> Crotch's Bumble Bee. ~~This mitigation measure shall only be required if Crotch's bumble bee remains as a candidate state endangered species or is listed as a state endangered species at the time of project construction. If Crotch's bumble bee is delisted, this mitigation measure shall not be required.~~ Due to the presence of suitable habitat for Crotch's bumble within the Project site, the following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential impacts to this species: Pre-construction Survey: To the extent feasible, construction activities (i.e., demolition, earthwork, clearing, and grubbing) shall occur outside of the Crotch's	Before Adoption of MND	City of Santa Clarita

	bee flight season (February 1 through October 31). If construction activities must occur during the flight season, a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey for Crotch's bumble bee queens, gynes, and colonies. The survey shall be conducted no more than 14 days prior to construction during optimal weather conditions (e.g., warm, sunny days between 65- and 90-degrees Fahrenheit). ~~If the preconstruction survey is negative, no further assessment shall be required, and construction activities shall be allowed to proceed without any further requirements. If Crotch's bumble bee is detected during the pre-construction survey, the measures below shall be implemented.~~ CESA Compliance: Prior to issuance of a grading permit, it shall be demonstrated that CESA-required consultation with CDFW regarding the project's effects to Crotch's bumble bee has occurred, and, if take of Crotch's bumble bee is expected, that CDFW has authorized such take through an incidental take permit, as applicable. In addition, if an incidental take permit is issued for the project that covers Crotch's bumble bee, that document shall supersede any inconsistent		

	measures provided in this report. Compensatory Mitigation: Compensatory mitigation for permanent direct impacts to suitable Crotch's bumble bee habitat shall be offset through compensatory mitigation, which may include, but is not necessarily limited to, on-site or off-site habitat preservation, enhancement, restoration, and/or creation at a ratio of no less than 1:1. However, if an incidental take permit is issued for the project that covers Crotch's bumble bee, that document(s) shall supersede any measures and mitigation ratios provided in this report.		
Rec. 2	While pre-construction surveys and re-location of encountered California legless lizards may prevent injury or mortality to those individuals, the measure provides no compensation for the loss of habitat for future generations of California legless lizard, and provides no mitigation for the coast horned lizard or coastal whiptail. CDFW recommends that compensatory mitigation of suitable habitat at a mitigation-to-impact ratio equal to or greater than 2:1 be provided to offset loss of habitat for these species.	Before Impacts	City of Santa Clarita
Rec. 3	CDFW recommends the City revise Mitigation Measure BIO-1 to clarify that the provisions related to night roosts and hibernacula will be implemented whether maternity roosts are present or not. CDFW recommends the following revisions, indicated by ~~strikeout~~.	Before Impacts	City of Santa Clarita

	Mitigation Measure BIO-1: *Sensitive Bat Species.* Due to the presence of potentially suitable habitat (i.e., bridge, culvert crossing, trees) for sensitive bat species, the following avoidance and minimization measures shall be implemented to avoid potential impacts to these species: *Pre-construction Survey:* A qualified biologist experienced with bats shall conduct a preconstruction survey within all suitable habitat on the project site to determine whether occupied hibernacula, night roosts, and/or maternity roosts occur within the project site. The preconstruction survey shall be conducted within 30 days prior to commencing construction activities (i.e., earthwork, clearing, grubbing, and fuel modification [including off-site fuel modification on private property]) and shall consist of two separate surveys conducted no more than a week apart. The second and final survey shall be conducted no more than seven days prior to commencing construction activities. The pre-construction surveys shall be conducted using a detector for echolocation calls, such as an Anabat bat detector system. The results of the pre-construction survey shall be documented by the qualified biologist. If the qualified biologist determines that no		

	sensitive bat ~~maternity~~ roosts are present, the activities shall be allowed to proceed without any further requirements. If the qualified biologist determines that big free-tailed bat, pallid bat, and/or western yellow bat ~~maternity~~ roosts are present, the following avoidance and minimization measures shall be implemented: *Maternity Roosts:* If occupied maternity roost(s) are identified during the pre-construction survey, no construction activities shall occur within 500 feet during the maternity roosting season (March 1 through September 30) or until a qualified bat biologist determines the roost is no longer active. A qualified biologist shall clearly delineate the 500-foot no work buffer(s), which shall be clearly marked with flags and/or fencing prior to the initiation of construction activities. *Night Roosts and Hibernacula:* To the extent feasible, no construction activities shall occur within 500 feet of active night roosts and/or hibernacula. The 500-foot no work buffer shall be left in place until project construction is completed or until a qualified bat biologist determines the roost/hibernaculum is no longer active. No project construction shall occur between 1.5 hours		

	before sunset and 1.5 hours after sunrise. If avoidance of active night roosts and/or hibernacula is not feasible, the qualified biologist shall prepare a Bat Roost Relocation Plan to remove active night roosts/hibernacula and construct alternative bat roost outside of the work area. The Relocation Plan shall be submitted to CDFW for review prior to construction activities. The qualified biologist shall implement the Relocation Plan and new roost sites shall be constructed before the commencement of any project construction (i.e., earthwork, clearing, grubbing, and fuel modification [including off-site fuel modification on private property]). Removal of roosts will be guided by accepted exclusion and deterrent techniques.		
Rec. 4	CDFW recommends the City prepare a landscape and turf maintenance plan that discusses, at a minimum, location, type, and timing of irrigation, the use of fertilizers and methods to prevent contaminated runoff entering the stream, and the use of herbicides and other pesticides and methods to prevent adverse effects on native plants and animals. CDFW further recommends the City prohibit the use of rodenticides. The plan should be provided to CDFW for review and comment.	Before Impacts	City of Santa Clarita
Rec. 5	Methods for minimizing adverse effects of artificial night lighting include lighting only where light is necessary, turning lights off when they are not in use (e.g.,	Before Impacts	City of Santa Clarita

	motion detector), only using as much light as is needed, directing the light only where it is needed, and using the lowest possible correlated color temperature for the goal of the lighting. CDFW recommends the City prepare a more detailed lighting plan that discusses, at a minimum, the criteria used by the City in selecting the various types of lighting fixtures, a schedule detailing the hours the various lights will be on, and steps taken by the City to minimize adverse effects. Examples of best management practices and ordinances can be found at Lighting ordinances | DarkSky International. The lighting plan should be provided to CDFW for review and comment.		