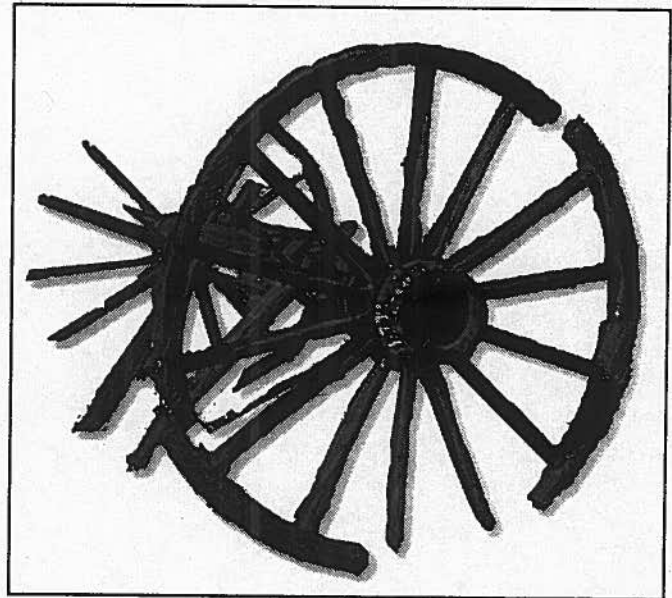


97.CWP-012.

Final
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT



for the
PALO COMADO RANCH
Tentative Tract Map No. 52396



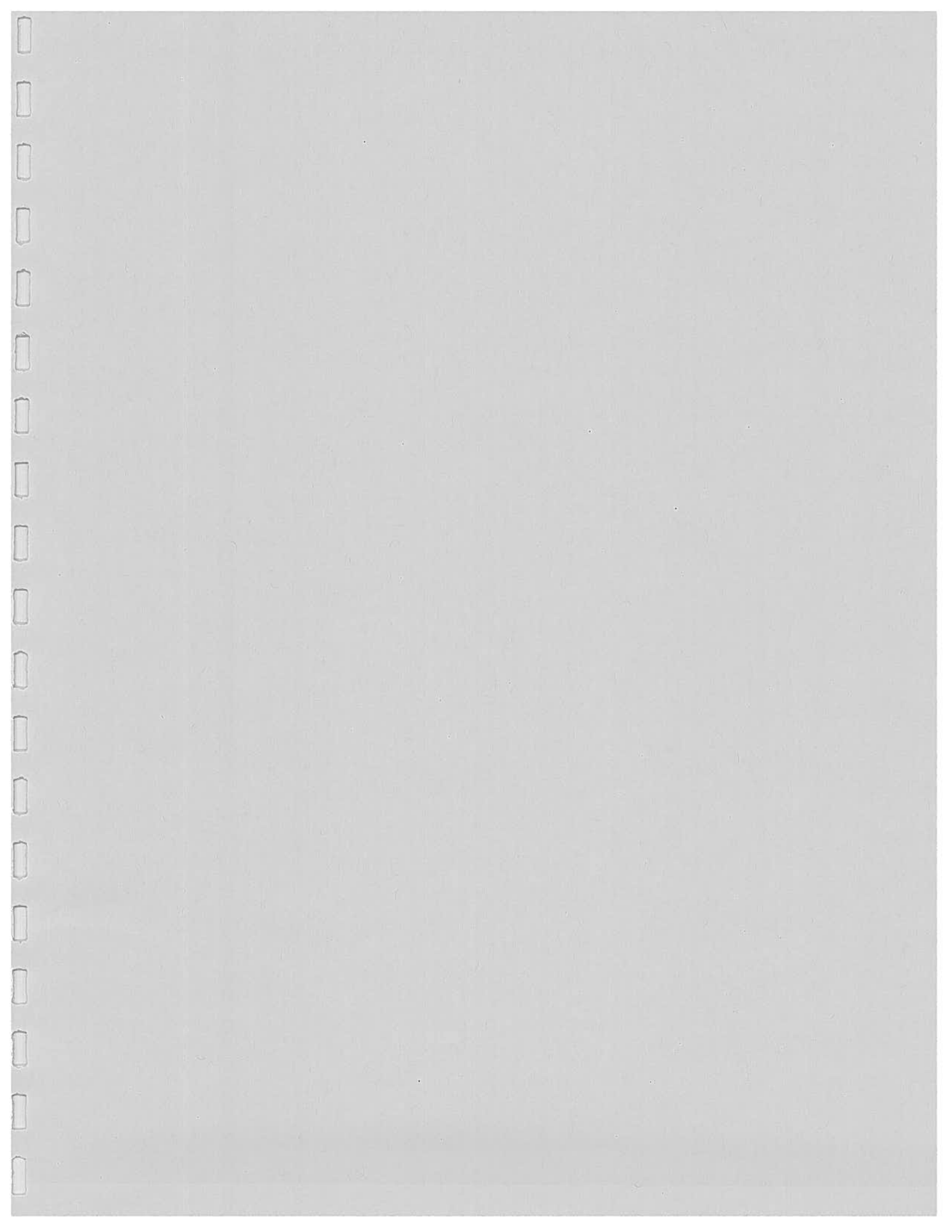
IMPACT SCIENCES
February 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction 1.0-1

2.0 Responses to Written Comments..... 2.0-1

3.0 Revised Draft EIR Pages 3.0-1



1.0 INTRODUCTION

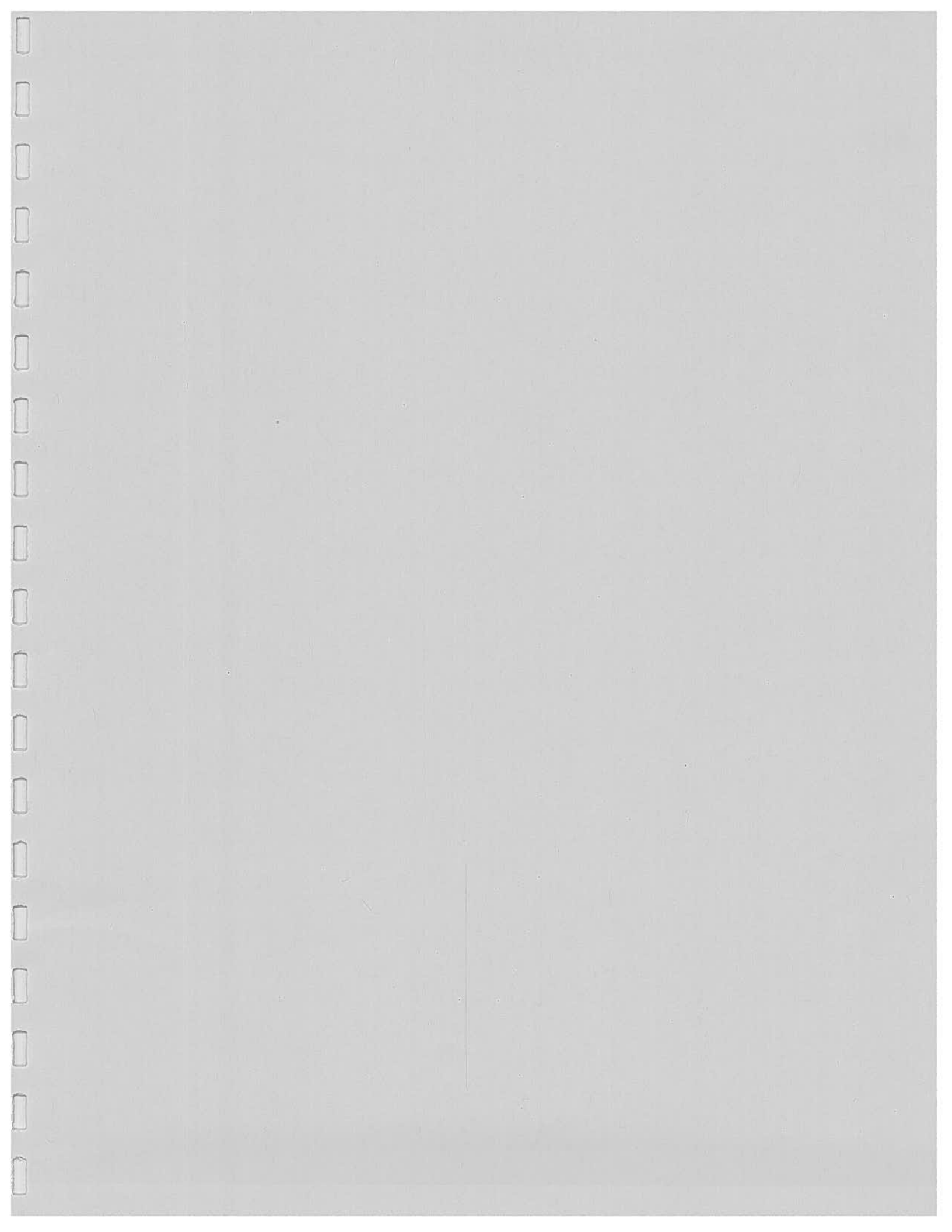
In compliance with §15088 of the State *CEQA Guidelines*, this document serves as the Final EIR for the Palo Comado Ranch project (Tentative Tract Map No. 52396). As required, this document provides responses to written comments received on the Draft EIR. The Draft EIR was circulated for public review for 45 days from October 12, 1999 to November 25, 1999.

The Final EIR is organized in the following manner:

Section 1.0 – This Introduction

Section 2.0 – Responses to Written Comments

Section 3.0 - Revised Draft EIR Pages



2.0 RESPONSES TO WRITTEN COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the EIR presents written comments received on the Palo Comado Ranch Draft EIR from public agencies and members of the general public. Responses for each comment are provided as required by §15088 of the State *CEQA Guidelines*. Comments found within each letter that pertain to the content and/or legal adequacy of the Draft EIR are identified by sequential numbers located in the right hand margin of each comment letter. A written response has been prepared for each numbered comment. The *CEQA Guidelines* requires that responses only be made to those comments which address the adequacy of the Draft EIR.

Provided below is a list of all written correspondence received by the City of Agoura Hills with respect to the Draft EIR:

Federal Agencies

1. United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, November 30, 1999 (see page 2.0-3)
2. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, November 24, 1999 (see page 2.0-7)

State Agencies

3. State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, December 6, 1999 (see page 2.0-19)
4. State of California, Business and Transportation Agency, Department of Transportation, November 10, 1999 (see page 2.0-22)
5. State of California, Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, November 23, 1999 (see page 2.0-24)

Local Agencies

6. County of Los Angeles, Fire Department, November 22, 1999 (see page 2.0-28)
7. County of Ventura, Resource Management Agency, Planning Division, November 24, 1999 (see page 2.0-32)
8. Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, November 23, 1999 (see page 2.0-34)
9. County of Ventura, Public Works Agency, Transportation Department, November 22, 1999 (see page 2.0-36)
10. Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, October 20, 1999 (see page 2.0-40)

Organizations/General Public

11. Old Agoura Homeowners Association, November 18, 1999 (see page 2.0-42)

The comments received and responses to the comments are presented below.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

November 30, 1999

Mike Kamino
Department of Planning and Community Development
City of Agoura Hills
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, California 91301-4335

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Palo Comado Ranch Project
(Tentative Tract 52396), Agoura Hills, California

Dear Mr. Kamino:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the draft environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed Palo Comado Ranch development. The applicant proposes to create 10 residential lots on the eastern side of the 90.9-acre property. The development would occupy approximately 20.6 acres, rising to 23.43 acres when fuel management areas are added. The remaining 67.5 acres would be set aside as open space.

The Service had originally provided comment on the notice of preparation for the EIR in a letter dated June 16, 1999. In that letter, we stated our concerns for several sensitive plant and animal species, indirect effects, and the impacts to wildlife movement that could occur. Given the current proposed project design, we have the following comments on the draft EIR:

1. The project is substantially redesigned from the version presented in the notice of preparation. Approximately 75 percent of the site would be set aside as open space and the residential development would be clustered on the eastern side. This approach avoids or minimizes some of the impacts that were apparent from the original project, including fragmentation and habitat loss. | 1
2. The draft EIR adequately identifies the significant impacts. Given the level of effects, the mitigation measures appear appropriate. | 2
3. The draft EIR mentions that all but 0.3 acre of the site is within the Palo Comado Significant Ecological Area (SEA). The EIR does not mention compliance with the County of Los Angeles' process for addressing projects that would affect an SEA which includes the preparation of a detailed biota report and evaluation by the SEA Technical | 3

Advisory Committee (SEATAC). The Service believes that, if the SEA process still applies in the City of Agoura Hills, the final EIR should discuss compliance with the recommendations of SEATAC. This rigorous review is essential in conserving the resources of the SEAs as they were intended in the County of Los Angeles original designations.

3

- 4. The draft EIR does not discuss completion of any focused surveys for any of the sensitive species listed in our letter on the notice of preparation. The Service believes that, given recent findings at Ahmanson Ranch and other areas nearby, the final EIR should include the results of surveys for the following species:

coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila c. californica*) - federally threatened
 least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) - federally and state endangered
 California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) - federally threatened
 Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) - federally and state endangered
 Santa Monica Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa ssp. ovatifolia*) - federally threatened
 Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) - federally threatened

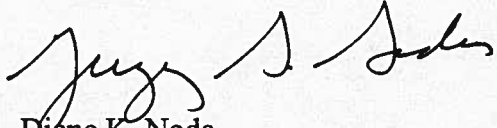
According to the biological resources report attached as Appendix 4.3 to the draft EIR, surveys were all completed in June, 1998. This should have been appropriate for detecting all of the plant species listed above. However, surveys for adequate detection of the coastal California gnatcatcher and least Bell's vireo require repetition over a period of time. Surveys for these bird species and for the California red-legged frog should follow guidelines developed by the Service.

4

In May 1999, biologists conducting surveys at Ahmanson Ranch in Calabasas found the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) which was believed to have been extinct for approximately 70 years. Given the proximity of the Ahmanson ranch site and the similarity of habitats, we recommend that surveys for this species be conducted at the Palo Comado Ranch site. Because it is an annual, such surveys should be performed in spring.

If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Rick Farris of my staff at (805) 644-1766.

Sincerely,


 for Diane K. Noda
 Field Supervisor

1. Letter from United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Diane K. Noda, dated November 30, 1999

Response 1

This comment states that the project is substantially redesigned and that this approach avoids or minimizes some of the impacts that were apparent from the original project, including fragmentation and habitat loss. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

Response 2

This comment states that the Draft EIR adequately identifies the significant impacts of the project and that the recommended mitigation measures appear appropriate. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

Response 3

Although the majority of the project site is located within the Palo Comado SEA, the City of Agoura Hills is the lead agency in this case and not the County. Consequently, the project is not subject to the County of Los Angeles' SEATAC process. However, a biological resources background report was prepared for the project (Appendix 4.3 of the Draft EIR) and impacts to biological resources were assessed in Section 4.3 of the Draft EIR. Although the reports were not prepared to meet SEATAC requirements, end result of identifying potential impacts and appropriate measures to mitigate the significant impacts is similar to the results that would be accomplished through the County's SEATAC procedures. The City of Agoura Hills also addresses SEA compatibility through Design Compatibility Criteria identified in the *Agoura Hills General Plan*. These are the same criteria utilized by the County of Los Angeles and the SEATAC. The project's consistency with these criteria is addressed in Table 4.4-2 (page 4.4-13) of the Draft EIR. As stated on page 4.4-12, the project is consistent with each of the Design Compatibility Criteria. Therefore, the project as designed is considered compatible with the resources found within the SEA.

Response 4

As stated on page 2 of the Biological Resources Background Report for Palo Comado Ranch (Appendix 4.3 of the Draft EIR), field surveys of the project site were conducted by Impact Sciences biologists on June 10, 16 and 17, 1998 to characterize the on-site habitats and to evaluate their potential to support special-status species. None of the sensitive species identified in this comment were observed on the

site during these surveys. There is a low potential for occurrence on the site for Lyon's pentachaeta and the San Fernando Valley spineflower because the soils and habitat on the site are unsuitable for these species (see Biological Resources Background Report pages 13 and 15). The Santa Monica Mountains dudleya and Braunton's milk-vetch are not expected to occur on the site since no chaparral or suitable soils for these species occur on the site (see Biological Resources Background Report pages 12 and 14). Based on the information presented in the EIR, no additional focused surveys are necessary for the adequate protection of these species.

The potential for the occurrence on the site of the California coastal gnatcatcher and Least Bell's vireo was also evaluated during the field surveys of the site. Neither of these species were observed during the surveys conducted on the project site. The potential for the gnatcatcher to occur on the site is considered low since the suitable nesting habitat on the site is considered to be of marginal quality and there are no recent records of this species occurring in the project vicinity (see Biological Resources Background Report page 24). Again, while not observed on the site, the Least Bell's vireo may occasionally stop at the site as a seasonal migrant; although there is no suitable breeding habitat to attract this species during the sensitive nesting season (see Biological Resources Background Report page 24). Despite the low potential for these species to occur at the site, mitigation measure 4.3-15 requires the applicant to have a field survey conducted by a qualified biologist for sensitive bird species prior to construction or site preparation activities that would occur during the nesting/breeding season of native bird species (typically March through August) (see Draft EIR pages 4.3-29 and 4.3-30). If active nests are found, the nesting areas will be protected by a fence barrier and clearing and construction within the fenced area shall be postponed or halted, at the discretion of a biological monitor, until the nest is vacated, juveniles have fledged and there is no evidence of a second attempt at nesting. This measure would provide adequate protection for any possible gnatcatchers or vireo nesting on the site.

No California red-legged frogs were observed on the site during the June 1998 site surveys. This species is also not expected to occur on the site given that Palo Comado Creek is a seasonal water source and the limited amount of overhanging streamside vegetation may preclude its occurrence (see Biological Resources Background Report page 20). There have also been no recent records of this species in the project vicinity. The proposed project would result in the construction of one small bridge over Palo Comado Creek and another small bridge over a tributary to the creek. Vegetation within the creek would also be thinned in accordance with County of Los Angeles Fire Prevention Bureau standards. However, there would be no anticipated impacts to California red-legged frogs in the unexpected event that they wander onto the site in the future. Based on this information, no additional focused surveys are considered necessary for the adequate protection of this species.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
401 West Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207



IN REPLY REFER TO:

L76 (SAMO)

November 24, 1999

Mike Kamino, Senior Planner
Department of Planning and Community Development
City of Agoura Hills
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

RE: Palo Comado Ranch Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
90.87 acres, 10 residential lots, 4 open space lots, Old Agoura adjacent to Palo Comado

Dear Mr. Kamino:

The National Park Service thanks the City for preparing the above-referenced EIR. We appreciate the EIR's disclosure of significant impacts and proposed mitigation measures. In spite of all attempts to mitigate development in this sensitive resource area, the cumulative impacts to the adjacent stream and the oak woodland remain negative and unavoidable. If funding comes available to purchase the property for parkland, then we recommend adopting the "No Project" alternative. Otherwise, we recommend the City work with Alternative 2, featuring the elimination of lots 9 and 10. We appreciate the applicant's effort to be consistent with the City's planning goals for Restricted Open Space and Significant Ecological Areas. The following comments are directed at enhanced consistency with City plans and the National Park Service's forthcoming revised General Management Plan and Simi Hills Comprehensive Design Plan.

1
2
3
4

Consolidation of Open Space Lot

We recommend creating one contiguous open space lot by eliminating lots 9 and 10, incorporating the portion of lot 8 west of the stream into the open space, and then consolidating lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and the portion of lot 8. Habitat fragmentation is the single greatest threat to biodiversity, especially in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Open space consolidation allows contiguous, maximized open space from the natural boundary of the stream to the western edge of the property.

We request the open space lot be offered to a parkland management agency. The National Park Service has the authority to accept this property's open space lot. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is another good candidate.

Reconfiguration of Lot 8

Regardless of open space lot consolidation, the portion of Lot 8 west of the stream should be incorporated into the protected open space lot. The reasons are unclear for the private ownership "bridge" within lot 8 between open space Lots 13 and 14. The current configuration adds 650 feet of interface between the private property and the abutting federal parkland. The interface increases the potential for residential/open space edge effects. Examples of edge effects include the replacement of native with non-native plants, the wildlife movement constriction because of threats from domestic pets, and erosion and water pollution from horse facilities. The EIR discusses edge effects as a significant impact. Several mitigation measures are proposed to reduce impacts at the edges of open space. Reconfiguration of the west end of lot 8 into the open space lot would avoid some of the impacts before they happen.

7

Fencing

The EIR recommends fencing as a way to separate the residential areas from open space. The National Park Service promotes only split rail and other wildlife-passable fencing. Barrier-type fences and walls are either unattractive or block the homeowner's view. They do not stop the transmission of non-native plants, and they are ineffective at stopping domestic pets from distracting wildlife. We have enclosed our brochure, "Welcome to the Neighborhood." The brochure describes ways builders and homeowners can help protect resources in the mountains.

8

Equestrian and Bike Lanes along Chesebro Road

The EIR proposes an equestrian path on the west side of Chesebro Road and a bike lane on the east side. The equestrian path will allow horseback riders to safely ride to the designated parkland entrance at Cheeseboro Trailhead. The bike lane is unnecessary for two reasons. First, it is on the wrong side of the road, since bicyclists are to ride with the flow of traffic. Second, it is safe to ride on Chesebro Road because traffic in this area is minimal.

9

Currently there is no public access to Palo Comado Canyon via the end of Chesebro Road. The draft Simi Hills Comprehensive Design Plan proposes an equestrian-only entrance at the end of the road, contingent on the cooperation of landowners in this part of Old Agoura. The draft plan does not contain any plans for park access through the project site.

10

Fuel Modification

The National Park Service does not allow private landowners to perform fuel modification on federal parkland. The 200-foot fuel modification zone for lot 8 would extend significantly into federal parkland. We hereby post notice to the City that we do not plan to grant an exception to the future owner of lot 8.

11

The EIR proposes to prohibit fuel modification within 75 feet of the stream only if this is acceptable to the Los Angeles County Fire Department. A cursory measurement from the center point of the lots to the 200 foot zone shows all developed lots except possibly Lot 4 would require brush clearance either to the stream or beyond the stream. We request the EIR preparers consult with the Fire Department and supply an answer to this proposed mitigation measure prior to certification of a final EIR.

12

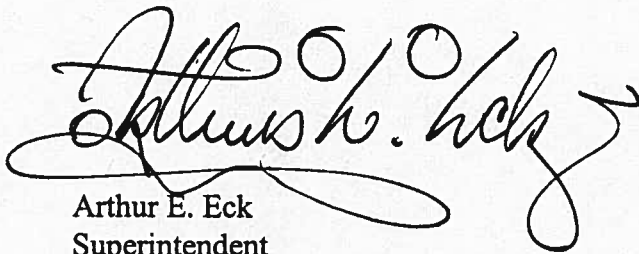
Habitat Restoration Plan

The EIR proposes to enhance 5.7 acres of habitat within Lot 11 to compensate for the loss of coastal sage scrub and oak woodland habitat. The EIR proposes hydroseeding with native shrub species and planting 37 valley oaks and 48 coast live oaks. The EIR treats the restoration effort as a one-season action: hydroseed with limited follow-up weeding, and plant the oak trees. Hydroseeding is not always successful. Oak trees need several years of watering before they become established in an upland area such as the proposed site. The EIR's mitigation plan needs to identify measurable performance standards for success and to develop an implementation schedule. Five years is the standard period for monitoring restoration. Also, a professional restoration project will establish a percent-plant-cover by which to measure success and will have contingency plans should the restoration fail. We support the EIR's recommendation to hire a professional contractor to perform the restoration.

13

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If the National Park Service can assist your staff in addressing our recommendations, please contact Melanie Beck, Outdoor Recreation Planner, at (805)370-2301.

Sincerely,



Arthur E. Eck
Superintendent

cc: Joe Edmiston, Executive Director, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Russ Guiney, Superintendent, Angeles District, State Department of Parks and Recreation



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
National Park Service
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
30401 Agoura Road, Suite 100
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

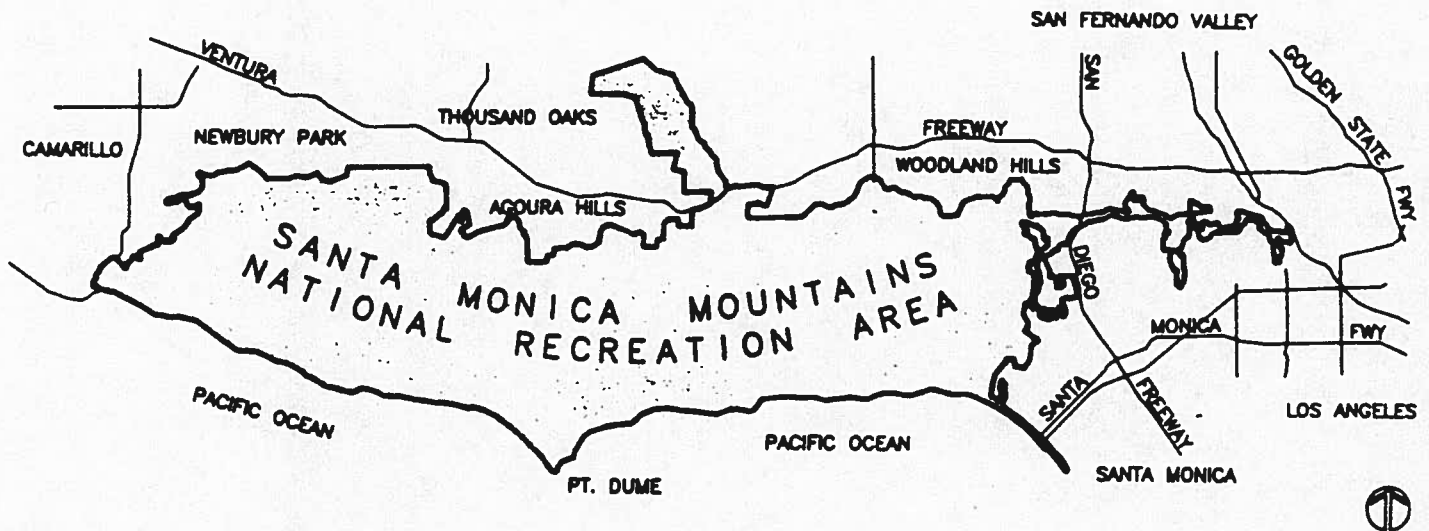
Welcome to the neighborhood

8 ways builders
& homeowners
can help protect resources
in the Santa Monica Mountains



Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area



Your neighbor, the National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) has had the privilege of being a member of the local community since 1978, when the U.S. Congress passed the law creating the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The NPS is responsible for managing the recreation area

"in a manner that will preserve and enhance its scenic, natural, and historic setting and its public health value as an airshed for Southern California metropolitan area, while providing for the recreational and educational needs of the visiting public" (Public Law 95-625).

We strive to accomplish this mission every day through a variety of programs. We protect wildlife and cultural resources, lead interpretive walks and environmental education classes, and build and manage recreational facilities so that the children of today and tomorrow can enjoy the special wonders of this unique mountain range. We are also involved in an ambitious land acquisition program. But unlike traditional national parks, Congress never intended the NPS to own all the land within the park boundary. Instead, the fulfillment of our mission depends on the cooperation of all public agencies, developers and residents who

own land in the mountains. By working together, we can make the biggest strides in protecting the mountain ecosystem, providing recreational and educational opportunities, and enhancing the quality of life for all those who call the Santa Monica Mountains "home."

Stop by and see us

The NPS owns and manages more than 20,000 acres of parkland in the Santa Monica Mountains. We offer miles of hiking, equestrian and bicycling trails, guided nature walks, and sites that can be reserved for special events. Our visitor center, at 30401 Agoura Road, Suite 100, in Agoura Hills, has a trained interpretation staff who will be happy to share information with you about the recreation area. You'll also find a variety of interesting books and maps for the whole family.

The visitor center is open Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We also publish *Outdoors in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area*, a quarterly calendar of events and guided walks in the mountains. For your free copy, phone (818) 597-9192. ■

Thinking about building a home in the Santa Monica Mountains?

Welcome to one of the most beautiful and unique areas in southern California. This 46-mile long mountain range offers spectacular scenic vistas, a wide array of outdoor recreation opportunities, and the chance to experience some of the last remnants of southern California's natural history. Although the 190,000 people who live in the mountains are the area's most obvious residents, they are not the only ones. An abundant variety of animals and plants also reside, forage or nest in the mountains. The survival of these species, and the preservation of the unique attributes that have drawn people to the mountains for centuries, rest in the hands of all of us. As a homebuilder, you can play an important role in ensuring that the Santa Monica Mountains continue to be a highly desirable place to live.

1 Landscape your home with drought-tolerant, native plants.

The landscaping around your home can be attractive, easy to maintain, and ecologically-sound if you follow one simple rule: choose plants that are drought-tolerant and, whenever possible, native to the vicinity. The California Native Plant Society publishes an excellent list of native plants and nurseries. For a copy, phone the National Park Service's Resource Management Division, (818) 597-1036, ext. 239.

If you must use a non-native plant, at least make sure it is drought-tolerant and non-invasive, especially if you live on the edge of a natural area. Invasive plant species, such as eucalyptus and Spanish broom, spread rapidly and displace the native plants which provide food, nesting material, and cover for wildlife. If you have a question about whether a plant is invasive, contact our Resource Management Division. Local water districts and planning departments are other good sources of information about native and drought-tolerant landscaping.

2 Site your home to avoid brush clearance on park land.

The steep, chaparral-covered slopes that give the Santa Monica Mountains their beauty, also make the mountains a high fire hazard area. To minimize fire danger to your property, your local fire department may require that you routinely clear flammable vegetation surrounding your home. Consult with your local fire agency as early as possible in your planning process to find out how many feet you will be required to clear. If your property is adjacent to park land,

make sure your home is set back as far as possible from the park boundary so that wildlife habitat and other park resources will not be destroyed during brush clearance. In some instances, brush clearing is not permitted on public land. If you are required to clear brush on a steep slope, ask your fire agency about replacement plants that can be used to control erosion.

3 Keep grading and site preparation to a minimum.

When homes are sited and designed in a way that is compatible with natural topography and drainage patterns, everyone wins. Outstanding natural features are preserved, downstream wetlands are protected from sedimentation and runoff, and scenic views from surrounding homes, roads and trails are retained. Construction costs may even be reduced. On the other hand, insensitive and excessive cut-and-fill operations alter the equilibrium of natural processes, destroy irreplaceable wildlife habitat, and degrade aesthetic resources which could, in turn, lower neighborhood property values. Before initiating any grading activity, make sure you have obtained all necessary permits; local jurisdictions can impose stiff penalties on property owners who grade illegally.

Did you know?

■ The Santa Monica Mountains contain seven endangered species, more than 50 other species listed on the federal listing as threatened.

■ Fourteen of the 64 Special Management Areas (SEAs) in the Santa Monica Mountains.

■ Thirteen raptor species actively nest in the mountains, including eagles, great horned owls, and hawks.

■ Point Mugu and other aquatic habitats are important for birds migrating from the Pacific to America.

■ The Santa Monica Mountains are one of the few places in the world where the Mediterranean climate is found among national parks.



4 Install fences that allow wildlife to pass through the perimeter of your property.

Many animals that live within the mountains must travel long distances to find food, water, and suitable cover. Mule deer, gray fox, bobcats and mountain lions all have home ranges of several hundred acres or more. Construction of homes and roads is the biggest threat to wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains. Development destroys habitat and fragments the landscape so that animals must travel farther to find the resources they need to survive. Property owners can assist wildlife by eliminating obstacles to free movement. If you are going to fence the perimeter of your property, use a split-rail fence or similar design that will allow unobstructed wildlife movement. A solid wall or fence can still be placed around your immediate backyard to provide privacy.



5 Select materials and colors for the exterior of your home that complement the natural environment.

Ask your architect to suggest paint and roof colors and construction materials that reflect the hues and textures of the surrounding landscape. The National Park Service recommends the use of non-vibrant, earth-tone colors and non-glare glass. Because many residents and visitors enjoy star-gazing in the mountains, make sure you select illumination devices that cast their beams inward and downward to avoid "light pollution." The nocturnal animals living around your home will also appreciate this. Lastly, when designing the exterior of your home, remember to take into account the views both looking to and from your property. One of the most precious features of the Santa Monica Mountains for residents and visitors alike is its scenic beauty.



6 Do not allow pets to roam free.

The opportunity to quietly observe wildlife in their natural setting is yet another joy of living in the Santa Monica Mountains. But wild animals in search of food can pose a threat to cats, dogs, and other domestic animals. To prevent your family pets from falling prey to predatory animals like coyotes and bobcats, never allow them to roam free. Small cats and dogs should be kept indoors at all times unless they are being supervised. Large dogs should be brought inside at night. If you put your dog in an outdoor dog run,

make sure it has a secure top or roof. Prohibiting pets from roaming free will not only protect them from danger, but also prevent small mammals, reptiles and birds from being injured or killed by a playful or inquisitive pet.

Also, do not leave food or garbage outdoors. It may attract wild animals to your home and encourage them to become dependent on an artificial food source.



7 Check to see if there are existing or proposed trails on, or near, your property.

Your city, county, or the state coastal commission may require that you provide a trail easement through your property to accommodate an existing or proposed trail system. One of the attractions of the Santa Monica Mountains for many homeowners is the availability of hiking, riding, and bicycling trails. Most of these trails are located on public land, but sometimes it is necessary for a public agency to acquire right-of-way on private land to provide a critical trail connection. Contact your city or county planning department and the National Park Service's Land Use Planning Division, to find out about proposed trails in your neighborhood.



8 Consider giving a gift of land.

One of the best ways to ensure that your land will always be a home to wildlife, retain its natural character, and be enjoyed by your family and the public for generations to come is by giving a gift of land to the National Park Service. Generally, you can receive substantial tax benefits by donating land, an easement, or funds to purchase lands. These advantages are mostly in the form of tax savings. Capital gain, inheritance, and real estate taxes may all be reduced. Your property maintenance costs and liability insurance are also likely to decrease. The donation of land through a will or family trust is one of the ways you can protect your land from future development, while providing tax benefits for your heirs. To find out more about our gift program, please contact our Land Use Planning Division.

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Questions?
If you have questions about any of the information presented in this brochure, please do not hesitate to contact our Land Use Planning or Resource Management Divisions. We are also available for on-site consultations.

Land Use Planning Division
(818) 597-1036, ext. 220

Resource Management Division
(818) 597-1036, ext. 239

2. Letter from United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, Arthur E. Eck, dated November 24, 1999

Response 1

This comment is generally correct in stating that the cumulative impacts to the adjacent stream and the oak woodland remain negative and unavoidable. However, the Draft EIR actually concludes that the direct and indirect impacts of the project to these habitats can be mitigated to less than significant levels. It is the cumulative loss of sensitive wildlife habitat (including grassland, sage scrub, riparian, and woodland habitats) that is a significant unavoidable impact when considered along with the ongoing and proposed loss of similar habitats in the region (see Draft EIR pages 4.3-24 and 4.3-33).

Response 2

This comment encourages the City of Agoura Hills to adopt the "No Project" alternative discussed on pages 6.0-2 and 6.0-3 of the Draft EIR if funding comes available to purchase the property for parkland. However, no substantive proposal has been made by any public agency or private-interest group to purchase the site. The City of Agoura Hills believes that the dedication of 70.3 acres (77.3 percent) of the site as permanent open space by the applicant is a benefit to the public at no cost to the public. The commentator's preference for the No Project alternative if funding is not available is noted.

Response 3

The encouragement of the commentator for the City of Agoura Hills to adopt Alternative 2 is noted. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

Response 4

The opinion of the commentator is noted. As discussed in Tables 4.4-1 and 4.4-2, as well as pages 4.4-4 and 4.4-12 of the Draft EIR, the proposed project is consistent with all applicable and appropriate policies of the Agoura Hills *General Plan* as well as the SEA Design Compatibility Criteria.

Response 5

The recommendation of the commentator to eliminate Lots 9 and 10 and a portion of Lot 8, and consolidating these areas along with open space Lots 11, 12, 13 and 14 is noted. This would reduce the total level of impacts to biological resources and reduce the level of mitigation required of the project. However, cumulative loss of sensitive wildlife habitat would still be considered unavoidable and significant when considered with the ongoing and proposed loss of similar habitats in the region. In addition, Lots 12, 13 and 14 are proposed to be owned by a homeowners association for the purpose of maintenance and fuel modification requirements. Given that no outside funding sources are known to exist for the site's purchase as open space, it is considered unlikely at this time that these lots would be included in any larger, publicly-owned open space lot. For these reasons, and because this suggested alternative would not fully achieve all the objectives of the project applicant, it has been rejected from further consideration.

Response 6

The request of the commentator is noted. As stated on page 3.0-9 of the Draft EIR, Lot 11 (66.0 acres) may be offered to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other suitable public open space agency for management and public use. As of this date, the applicant has not made the decision regarding which, if any, agency will be offered Lot 11 or any other portions of the project site.

Response 7

The recommendation of the commentator to incorporate the portion of Lots 8 west of Palo Comado Creek into the larger open space lot is noted. The connection between the eastern and western portions of this lot is an existing stream crossing. No bridge is proposed to be constructed in this location. It is the intent of the applicant to allow only passive activity in this area similar to that which already occurs on the site, and not allow any construction in this portion of the lot. Impacts associated with this lot are discussed throughout the Draft EIR, as are several suggested mitigation measures intended to reduce the impacts associated with edge effects.

Response 8

Mitigation measures 4.3-16 and 4.3-17 recommend the use of wildlife sensitive fencing adjacent to open space areas. These measures are consistent with the recommendations of the commentator.

Response 9

The EIR does not propose an equestrian path and bike lane along Chesebro Road. These features are included by the applicant to meet the current roadway standards of the City of Agoura Hills. The EIR assesses the impacts associated with these and all proposed project features. The City is considering eliminating the bike lane requirement and possibly the equestrian trail requirement since similar features are not provided along the segment of Chesebro Road south of the project site. This decision will be made by the City Planning Commission and City Council. The recommendation of the commentator to eliminate the bike lane is noted.

Response 10

Page 3.0-3 of the Draft EIR indicates that public access to Palo Comado Canyon is not available via the end of Chesebro Road; this is a locked service and emergency access entrance. This same page points out, however, that it is not uncommon for people to walk, run, or ride their bicycles or horses to and from this entrance. Access to Palo Comado Canyon is not proposed for any portion of the project site.

Response 11

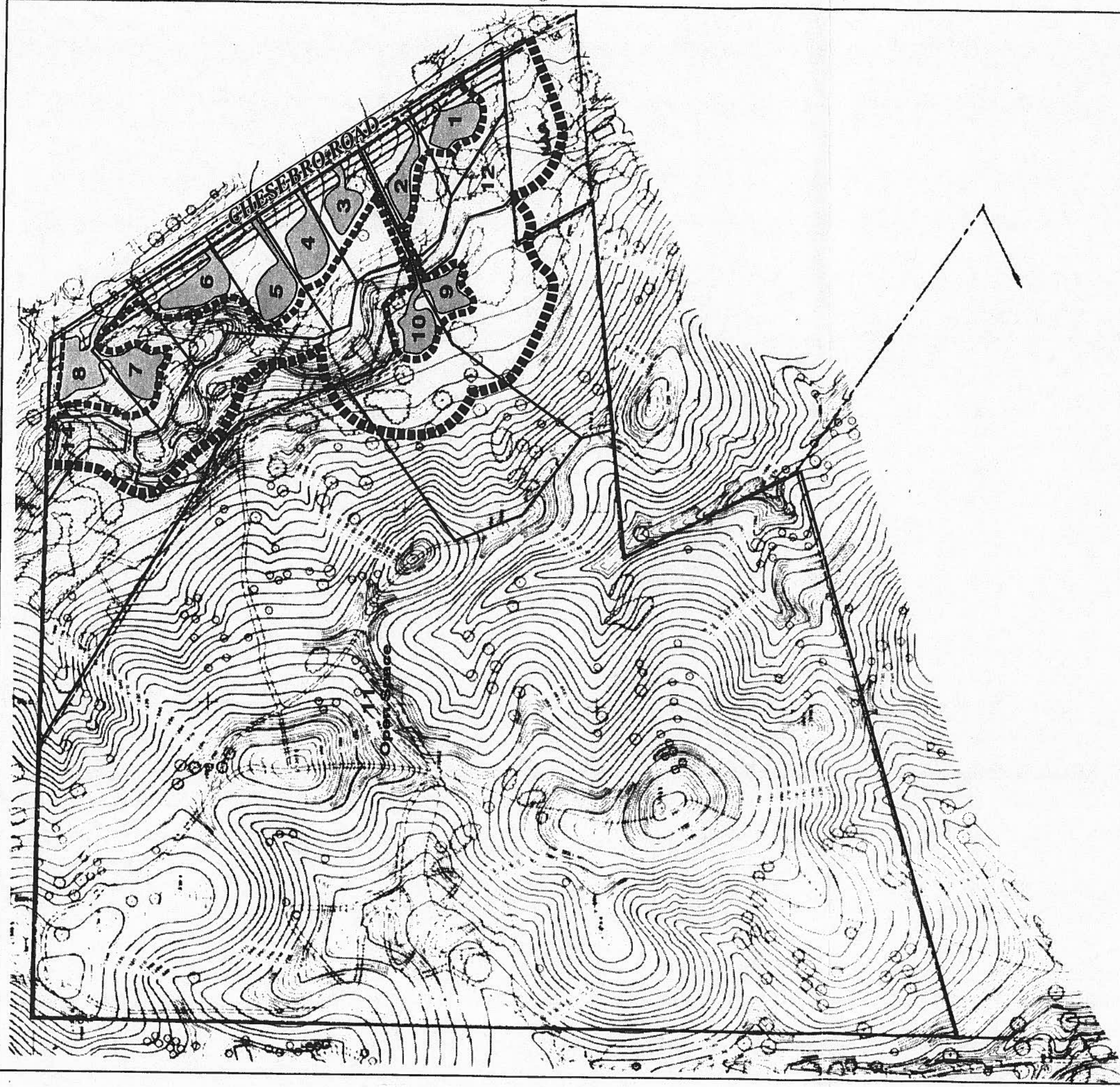
A preliminary fuel modification plan approved for the project by the County of Los Angeles Fire Prevention Bureau is illustrated in **Figure RTC-1**. As shown, the County is requiring the owner of Lot 8 to implement Zone B irrigation requirements. No off site fuel modification measures on the National Park Service property will be required or requested.

Response 12

The Preliminary Fuel Modification Plan approved by the County of Los Angeles Fire Prevention Bureau would affect the majority of Palo Comado Creek. Actual fuel modification requirements will be determined by the Fire Prevention Bureau for each residential lot based on the ultimate location of structures and landscaping proposed by future lot owners.

Response 13

The EIR does not propose to enhance 5.7 acres of habitat within Lot 11 to compensate for the loss of coastal sage scrub and oak woodland habitat. This is proposed by the applicant. Mitigation measure 4.3-13 recommends that the applicant implement this program, but that the size of the area be



LEGEND




-  Zone A
-  Zone B
-  Zone C



FIGURE **RTC-1**

Approved Preliminary Fuel Modification Plan

PALO COMADO RANCH EIR

increased to a minimum of 6.85 acres and that the shrub seed mix be changed to better reflect the existing habitat surrounding the area. This measure also requires that a planting and maintenance plan be developed by a qualified restoration specialist to address the coastal sage scrub restoration and enhancement. The plan will specify, at a minimum, the following: (1) the location of the planting site; (2) the quantity and species of plants to be planted; (3) planting procedures, including the use of irrigation; (4) the amount and location of exotic species removal from riparian habitat areas, if appropriate; (5) a schedule and action plan to maintain and monitor the plantings for a minimum 5-year period; and (6) a list of criteria (e.g., growth, plant cover, survivorship) by which to measure success of the plantings, as well as contingency measures if the plantings are not successful. Guidelines for preserving remaining riparian habitat shall also be included in the plantings and maintenance plan. This plan shall be submitted to and approved by the City of Agoura Hills prior to issuance of grading permits.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Governor's Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse



Gray Davis
GOVERNOR

STREET ADDRESS: 1400 TENTH STREET ROOM 222 SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814
MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 3044 SACRAMENTO, CA 95812-3044
916-445-0613 FAX 916-323-3018 www.opr.ca.gov/clearinghouse.html

Loretta Lynch
DIRECTOR

December 6, 1999

MIKE KAMINO
CITY OF AGOURA HILLS
30101 Agoura Court, suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301-4335

Subject: Palo Comado Ranch
SCH#: 98051087

Dear MIKE KAMINO:

The State Clearinghouse submitted the above named environmental document to selected state agencies for review. The review period closed on December 3, 1999, and no state agencies submitted comments by that date. This letter acknowledges that you have complied with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. | 1

Please call the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions regarding the environmental review process. If you have a question about the above-named project, please refer to the eight-digit State Clearinghouse number when contacting this office.

Sincerely,

Terry Roberts
Senior Planner, State Clearinghouse

**Document Details Report
State Clearinghouse Data Base**

SCH# 98051087
Project Title Palo Comado Ranch
Lead Agency Agoura Hills, City of

Type eir Draft EIR
Description Creation of 10 residential lots and four open space lots. Each residential lot would be sold and developed on an individual basis. The only physical improvements proposed as part of the subdivision are the extension of required utilities to each lot, grading and construction of the final half-street segment of Chesebro Road along the projet frontage and grading and construction of driveway / bridge improvements for four lots which utilize common driveways.

Lead Agency Contact

Name MIKE KAMINO
Agency CITY OF AGOURA HILLS
Phone 818-597-7321 **Fax**
cmail
Address 30101 Agoura Court, suite 102
City Agoura Hills **State** CA **Zip** 91301-4335

Project Location

County LOS ANGELES
City Agoura Hills
Region
Cross Streets CHESEBRO RD.,
Parcel No.
Township **Range** **Section** **Base**

Proximity to:

Highways
Airports
Railways
Waterways Palo Comado Creek
Schools
Land Use Single, vacant parcel. Zoned OS [Open Space] . Designated OS-R [Restricted Open Space].

Project Issues Aesthetic/Visual; Drainage/Absorption; Flood Plain/Flooding; Geologic/Seismic; Septic System; Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading; Vegetation; Water Quality; Wetland/Riparian; Wildlife; Growth Inducing; Landuse; Cumulative Effects

Reviewing Agencies Resources Agency; Department of Conservation; Department of Fish and Game, Region 5; Office of Historic Preservation; Department of Parks and Recreation; Department of Water Resources; Caltrans, District 7; Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 4; Native American Heritage Commission; State Lands Commission

Date Received 10/20/1999 **Start of Review** 10/20/1999 **End of Review** 12/03/1999

3. Letter from State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, Terry Roberts, December 6, 1999

Response 1

This comment states that the Draft EIR was submitted to selected state agencies for review and that no state agencies submitted comments by the end of the review period on December 3, 1999. The comment letter acknowledges that the City of Agoura Hills has complied with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents pursuant to CEQA. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 07, ADVANCE PLANNING
IGR OFFICE 1-10C
120 SO. SPRING ST.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012
TEL: (213) 897-1333 ATSS: 8- 647-1333
FAX: (213) 897-0590
E-Mail Smateen@dot.ca.gov



November 10, 1999

Subj: Notice of Completion
Palo Comado Ranch SCH 98051087, IGR 991085SM

MIKE KAMINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
City of Agoura Hills
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Dear Mr. Kamino:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding the above referenced project. This project is located at Chesebro Road. The proposed development is near to State Right-of-way (SR-101).

We are aware that the proposed project is to create ten residential lots and four open space lots with the expectation that each lot would be sold and separately developed.

Based on the review of the information received, we have no comment at this time. If we identify any new issues that should be brought to your attention, we will contact you.

| 1

If you have any questions regarding this response, please feel free to contact the undersigned at (213)897-4429 or Sameerah Mateen, the IGR/CEQA Coordinator for the project at (213)897-1333. Please reference this project by - IGR991085SM.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN J. BUSWELL
IGR/CEQA Program Manager
Transportation Planning Office

cc: ATP-File
Moise Boyd, State Clearinghouse

4. Letter from State of California, Business and Transportation Agency, Department of Transportation, Stephen Buswell, November 10, 1999

Response 1

This comment states that the Department of Transportation has no comments on the Draft EIR. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—RESOURCES AGENCY

Gray Davis, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Angeles District
1925 Las Virgenes Road
Calebeses, California 91302
(818)880-0350



November 23, 1999

Mike Kamino
City of Agoura Hills
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301-4335

Subject: Palo Comado Ranch

Dear Mr. Kamino:

The Angeles District of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) has reviewed the proposed Draft Environmental Impact (EIR), for Palo Comado Ranch. We offer the following comments on the proposed project.

The Department is encouraged and supports policies outlined in the Draft EIR particularly those that will help protect the public investment in providing an open space buffer for Palo Comado Creek. Along with a majority of the property west of Palo Comado Creek, which would be preserved in its natural state as open space lot, under the management of Santa Monica Conservancy or another public trust agency. However, we are concerned about the development and the cumulative loss of sensitive wildlife of an open space area being converted to a residential area.

The proposed project site contains a high quality riparian system, which is a crucial link in supporting the unique ecosystem of the Santa Monica Mountains. Palo Comado Creek is a perennial stream, which supports the majority of flora and fauna in the area. The entire proposed project site is located within the Palo Comado Canyon SEA except 0.3 acres at the far northwestern corner of this proposed site. Palo Comado Canyon SEA is a critical area that protects the watershed region of Palo Comado Creek and is a buffer zone for the Santa Monica National Recreation Area.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is concerned about the direct and indirect impacts to Palo Comado Canyon. Direct impacts by humans could affect the biota of the area by altering the native vegetation through the introduction of ornamental and non-native plants used in landscaping and gardens that could displace and destroy native vegetation especially in the riparian area.

Mike Kamino
November 23, 1999
Page 2

Additionally, this proposed project could potentially increase human and animal interaction in the adjacent open space area, which could result in distributing sensitive plant communities, such as coast live oak riparian woodlands and coastal sage scrub habitats. Furthermore, this potential increase to the open space area could result in displacement of a number of wildlife habitats and disrupt wildlife nesting and roosting areas.

3

These disruptions could be further increased by the construction of primary and secondary buildings, which has the potential to increase refuse and pollutants to the area. In addition, the Department is concerned about brush clearance required by Los Angeles County Fire Department. We feel that the required fuel modification will greatly reduce vegetation density in the area. This will greatly impact the ecosystem of the area by the eliminating cover, food sources, and disrupt the normal animal foraging activities associated with the area. Over along period of time, these disturbances could have a long-term affect on the habitats of the remaining wildlife species, resulting in their displacement from the area and destruction of this unique riparian ecosystem.

4

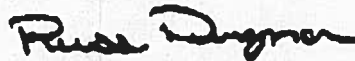
5

The Department is optimistic and encouraged by Alternative #2, with the following modifications. Elimination of one additionally residential lot (lot 8) at the far northwest corner, along with the other two previous named lots (lots 9 & 10) located on the west side of Palo Comado Creek. With the elimination of these three lots the total acres of open spaces will increase from 70.3 to 83.1 acres of open space and will provide a buffer for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation. Without these modifications the California Department of Parks and Recreation supports Alternative #1, the no project alternative.

6

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Russ Dingman
District Planner

5. Letter from State of California, Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, Russ Dingman, November 23, 1999

Response 1

The concerns and opinions of the commentator are noted and addressed in the following responses. The biological quality of the project site, including Palo Comado Creek and the Palo Comado Canyon SEA (SEA #12) are discussed on pages 4.3-2 through 4.3-13 of the Draft EIR. The statement that Palo Comado Creek is a perennial stream is incorrect, at least within the project site. It is a seasonal water source within the project boundaries.

Response 2

The concerns and opinions of the commentator about the direct and indirect impacts to Palo Comado Canyon are noted. The potential direct and indirect impacts of the project to the biological resources on the site, including Palo Comado Canyon, are discussed on pages 4.3-13 through 4.3-24 of the Draft EIR. Impacts associated with the potential increase in populations of non-native plant species associated with an urban environment are discussed on pages 4.3-22 and 4.3-23 of the Draft EIR and are considered potentially significant. Mitigation measures 4.3-19, 4.3-20, and 4.3-21 would reduce this potential impact to less than significant levels.

Response 3

Potential impacts associated with increased human and domestic animal presence on the project site, including impacts to the flora and fauna of the adjacent open space areas, are discussed on pages 4.3-21 and 4.3-22 of the Draft EIR and are considered potentially significant to biological resources. Mitigation measures 4.3-16, 4.3-17, and 4.3-18 would reduce this potential impact to less than significant levels.

Response 4

Potential impacts to biological resources associated with construction-related activities and increased nutrient levels from landscaping activities and livestock droppings (refuse and pollutants) are discussed on pages 4.3-23 and 4.3-24 of the Draft EIR and are considered potentially significant. Mitigation measures 4.3-18, 4.3-19, 4.3-23, 4.3-24, 4.3-25, 4.3-26, and 4.3-27 would reduce these potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Response 5

The concerns and opinions of the commentator about the brush clearance (fuel modification) required by the County of Los Angeles Fire Prevention Bureau are noted. Impacts to plant communities associated with this requirement are included in the analysis of direct impacts to plant communities presented on pages 4.3-14 through 4.3-16 of the Draft EIR. These overall direct impacts would significantly impact four of the 10 plant communities on the site and four special-status wildlife species. Mitigation measures 4.3-8, 4.3-9, 4.3-10, 4.3-11, 4.3-12, 4.3-13, and 4.3-14 would reduce these potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Response 6

The encouragement of the commentator for the City of Agoura Hills to adopt Alternative 2 with the additional elimination of Lot 8 is noted. Also noted is the commentator's support of Alternative 1 if Alternative 2 and Lot 8 removal is not adopted by the City. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

1380 NORTH EASTERN AVENUE
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90021-3294

(323) 890-4330

P. MICHAEL FREEMAN
FIRE CHIEF
FORESTER & FIRE WARDEN

November 22, 1999

Mike Kamino, Senior Planner
City of Agoura Hills
Department of Planning and Community Development
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Dear Mr. Kamino:

**SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PUBLIC REVIEW -- DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
PALO COMADO RANCH RESIDENTIAL PROJECT TTM #52396 -- CITY OF
AGOURA HILLS (EIR#756/1999)**

We have reviewed the Notice of Public Review for the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Palo Comado Ranch Residential Project TTM #52396. This project which is located in the northern portion of the City of Agoura Hills along the western side of Chesebro Road, north of the 101 Freeway, has been reviewed by the Planning, Subdivision and Forestry Divisions of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department. In addition to our previous letter of July 16, 1998 found in Appendix 1.0(b), we have the following comments:

The statutory responsibilities of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department Forestry Division include erosion control, watershed management, rare and endangered species, vegetation, fuel modification for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones or Fire Zone 4, archeological and cultural resources and the County Oak Tree Ordinance. Potential impacts in these areas were to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report as stated in our response to the Notice of Preparation. 1

An archaeological and historical records check and field survey should be conducted to determine potential impacts to these resources. 2

SERVING THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND THE CITIES OF:

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| AGOURA HILLS | BRADBURY | CUDAHY | HIDDEN HILLS | LANCASTER | PALMDALE | ROLLING HILLS ESTATES | TEMPLE CITY |
| ARTESIA | CALABASAS | DIAMOND BAR | MUNTINGTON PARK | LA PUENTE | PALOS VERDES ESTATES | ROSEMead | WALNUT |
| AZUSA | CARSON | DUARTE | INDUSTRY | LAWNDALE | PARAMOUNT | SAN DIMAS | WEST HOLLYWOOD |
| BALOWIN PARK | CERRITOS | EL MONTE | IRVINDALE | LOMITA | PICO RIVERA | SANTA CLARITA | WESTLAKE VILLAGE |
| BELL | CLAREMONT | GLENDORA | LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE | MALIBU | POMONA | SIGNAL HILL | WHITTIER |
| BELFLOWER | COMMERCE | HAWAIIAN GARDENS | LAKewood | MAYWOOD | RANCHO PALOS VERDES | SOUTH EL MONTE | |
| BELL GARDENS | COVINA | HAWTHORNE | LA MIRADA | NORWALK | ROLLING HILLS | SOUTH GATE | |

Mike Kamino, Senior Planner
November 22, 1999
Page 2

Without the availability of the fuel modification plan required for this project, important impacts to the biota cannot be fully determined, therefore the plan should be included in the EIR. | 3

We concur with the comments made by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in their June 15, 1998 response to the Notice of Preparation. We further recommend "Project Alternative 2: Eight Lot Alternative" due to the Biological sensitivity and impact upon Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area No. 12. | 4

If you have any additional questions, please contact this office at (323) 890-4330.

Very truly yours,

Michael A. Wilkinson

MICHAEL A. WILKINSON, CHIEF, FORESTRY DIVISION,
PREVENTION BUREAU

MAW:jmb

6. Letter from County of Los Angeles, Fire Department, Michael A. Wilkinson, November 22, 1999

Response 1

Potential impacts of the proposed project as they relate to erosion control, watershed management, rare and endangered species, vegetation, fuel modification requirements, archaeological resources, and oak trees are discussed in the Draft EIR. It should be noted, however, that the project is subject to the City of Agoura Hills' Oak Tree Ordinance as opposed to the County's Ordinance since the City is the lead agency for the project.

Response 2

An archaeological and historical records search was conducted for the project in April 1999. No sensitive sites have been recorded on the proposed project site. The investigation did identify the presence of two prehistoric sites and several previous archaeological survey/investigation locations within one half mile of the project site. However, the area of the site proposed for development has been subject to human, animal and machinery disturbance over many years, and consequently, the potential for archaeological resources to be found on the surface of this area is considered very low. However, the potential does exist for subsurface resources to be discovered during earthmoving operations. Based on this potential, page 11-8 of the Mitigation Monitoring Program of the Draft EIR (Section 11.0) requires the applicant and construction manager to retain a professional archaeologist or paleontologist to evaluate the significance of any archaeological or paleontological resources that may be found during site grading and to identify appropriate methods of preserving or cataloguing any significant resources. The City believes that this mitigation measure adequately precludes the occurrence of potentially significant impacts to sensitive cultural resources. The open space areas of the site would not be subject to soil disturbance and any resources located within these areas would not be disturbed or impacted.

Response 3

A preliminary fuel modification plan was approved for the project by the County of Los Angeles Fire Prevention Bureau. This plan is illustrated in Figure RTC-1. The Draft EIR assessed potential impacts to biological resources associated with this plan (see Draft EIR pages 4.3-14 through 4.3-16).

Response 4

The concurrence of the commentator with the comments made by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in their June 15, 1998 response to the Notice of preparation, and the recommendation to implement Alternative 2 is noted. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY
county of ventura

Planning Division

Keith A. Turner
Director

November 24, 1999

M Kamino
Agoura Hills, CA

FAX #: (818) 879-1440

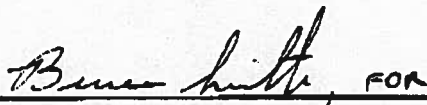
Subject: Palo Comado Ranch Project

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the subject document. Attached are the comments that we have received resulting from intra-county review of the subject document. | 1

Your proposed responses to these comments should be sent directly to the commentator, with a copy to Joseph Eisenhut, Ventura County Planning Division, L#1740, 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009.

If you have any questions regarding any of the comments, please contact the appropriate respondent. Overall questions may be directed to Joseph Eisenhut at (805) 654-2464.

Sincerely,



Keith Turner
County Planning Director

1/32-499

Attachment

County RMA Reference Number 99-109



7. Letter from County of Ventura, Resource Management Agency, Planning Division, Keith Turner, November 24, 1999

Response 1

This letter indicates that comments resulting from intra-county review of the Draft EIR are attached. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

**VENTURA COUNTY
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT**
Memorandum

NOV 23 1999

TO: Joseph Eisenhut, Planning

DATE: November 23, 1999

FROM: Molly Pearson *MP*

SUBJECT: Draft Environmental Impact Report and Initial Study for Palo Comado Ranch, City of Agoura Hills (Reference No. 99-109)

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) staff has reviewed the subject Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and Initial Study. The DEIR addresses environmental impacts associated with the development of 10 custom homes, and the subdivision of the 90.9 acre property into 10 residential lots and four permanent open space lots. The project involves the review and approval of a Vesting Tentative Tract Map (No. 52396), Conditional Use Permit, and Oak Tree Permit, by the city of Agoura Hills Planning Commission and City Council. Although no actual homes are proposed at this time, the subject DEIR will serve as the environmental documentation for the future development of each residential lot as it is presented in the project description.

District staff concurs with the findings of the Initial Study and DEIR with respect to air quality issues, and has no further comments. | 1

If you have any questions, please call me at 645-1439.

8. Memorandum from Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, Molly Pearson, November 23, 1999

Response 1

This comment states that Air Pollution Control District staff concur with the findings of the Initial Study and Draft EIR with respect to air quality issues and has no further comment. Therefore, no further response is required.



**PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
Traffic and Planning & Administration**

MEMORANDUM

November 22, 1999

TO: Resource Management Agency, Planning Division
Attention: Joseph Eisenhut

FROM: Nazir Lalani, Principal Engineer *NLL*

SUBJECT: Review of Document Number 99-109
Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration
Palo Comado Ranch - Chesebro Road, Agoura Hills
Palo Comado Ranch Partnership
Lead Agency: The City of Agoura Hills

The Transportation Department has reviewed the subject Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration. The proposed project consists of subdividing a 90.9-acre site into 10 residential lots and four permanent open space lots. The project is located in the northern portion of the City of Agoura Hills, in an area referred to as Old Agoura. We offer the following comments:

1. We concur with the Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration for those areas under the purview of the Transportation Department, provided the City or the project proponent remits the traffic impact mitigation fee to Ventura County as required by the reciprocal traffic agreement between the City of Agoura Hills and the County of Ventura. No adverse site-specific impacts are expected from this project on the County's Regional Road Network. Therefore, we will not require the construction of road improvements to mitigate site-specific impacts with this project. 1
2. The initial study indicated that this project would generate approximately 115 average daily traffic (ADT). The project has the potential to create a cumulative adverse traffic impact on County roads. According to the reciprocal traffic agreement, the cumulative impact of additional traffic on County roads should be mitigated through payment of an appropriate traffic impact mitigation fee (TMF). Based on traffic information provided by the Transportation/Circulation section of the Initial Study, the TMF due to the County would be: 2

115 ADT X 132 per ADT

= \$15,180

The above fee may be subject to adjustment at the time of deposit, due to provisions in the Traffic Impact Mitigation Ordinance allowing the fee to be adjusted for inflation based on the Caltrans District 7 construction cost index.

3. If the project cumulative impacts are not mitigated by payment of a traffic mitigation fee, current General Plan policy will require County opposition to this project. | 3
4. Our review of this project is limited to the impacts this project may have on the County's Regional Road Network. | 4

Please call me at 654-2080 if you have questions.

c: Rich Guske

NL-RH-BE:ar

f:\common\transport\wpwin\memos\99-109_1.doc

9. Memorandum from County of Ventura, Public Works Agency, Transportation Department, Nazir Lalani, November 22, 1999

Response 1

This letter indicates that the Ventura County Transportation Department concurs with the Initial Study and Draft EIR provided that the reciprocal traffic impact mitigation fee is paid to Ventura County, and that no adverse site-specific impacts are expected from this project on the Ventura County regional road network. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

Response 2

The City of Agoura Hills has a reciprocal traffic agreement with the County of Ventura to mitigate potential cumulative impacts of projects in Agoura Hills on roadways within Ventura County. The traffic mitigation fees paid in accordance with the agreement are based on the number of project-generated trips that are anticipated to travel on Ventura County roads. Although the project site is located adjacent to the Ventura County boundary line, no project-generated trips would travel directly into Ventura County since Chesebro Road ends at the County line and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is located at the roadway's end. Project-generated vehicle trips would have to travel south on Chesebro Road and then through the western half of Agoura Hills, either on surface streets or the Ventura Freeway, to enter into Ventura County. Both the City Engineer¹ and City Traffic Engineer² conclude that very few, if any, trips from the proposed project would travel on Ventura County roads on a consistent basis. Therefore, they dispute the traffic impact mitigation fee (TMF) requested by the commentator. For example, a 12-unit project recently approved in the Ventura County community of Oak Park (two units more than the proposed Palo Comado Ranch project) that would have a higher percentage of its trips traveling through Agoura Hills than would the proposed project have traveling through Ventura County was conditioned to pay a TMF of \$3,816 to the City of Agoura Hills.³ No other project in Oak Park has been conditioned to pay any TMF to the City of Agoura Hills. Because very few, if any, project-generated would travel on Ventura County roads on a consistent basis, the City Engineer does not believe that any TMF paid to Ventura County is warranted for this project.⁴ Consequently, this suggested mitigation measure is being rejected from further consideration.

¹ Interview with Jim Thorsen, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 21, 1999.

² Interview with Ed Klein, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 15, 1999.

³ Interview with Jim Thorsen, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 21, 1999.

⁴ Interview with Jim Thorsen, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 21, 1999.

Response 3

The statement that the County will be required to oppose the proposed project if cumulative impacts are not mitigated by payment of a TMF is noted. Based on the information presented in Response 2 above, the project is not expected to have any potentially significant impacts on roadways in Ventura County and no TMF is warranted.

Response 4

This comment is noted. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.



Dedicated to Quality Service

OFFICERS

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Director, Division 1

Vice President
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James E. Colbaugh
General Manager

Wayne K. Lemieux
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FILTRATION PLANT
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www.lvmwd.dst.ca.us

MEMBER AGENCY OF THE
METROPOLITAN WATER
DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

October 20, 1999

City of Agoura Hills
30101 Agoura Court, Suite 102
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Attention: Mike Kamino

Subject: **Notice of Public Review of a Draft Environmental
Impact Report - Palo Comado Ranch
Tentative Tract Map No. 52396**

Dear Mr. Kamino:

We are responding to the Notice of Public Review of an Draft Environmental Impact Report concerning Palo Comado Ranch-Tentative Tract Map No. 52396 in the City of Agoura Hills, California. The project site consists of a single, vacant parcel, covering approximately 90.9 acres of land. The applicant is requesting approval to subdivide the project site into 10 residential lots and open space lots. The project lies wholly within the service area of the District. Accordingly, we will be the purveyor of potable water service. There are no sewers in the vicinity of this proposed development and the nearest reclaimed water is located at Driver Ave. and Colodny Drive.

An 8" line terminates in Chesebro Road 1300' north of the intersection of Fairview Avenue and Chesebro Road. The proposed development would require an extension of the existing 8" line to the County line. Public fire protection for lots will be provided from hydrants along Chesebro Road installed as part of the mainline extension.

The existing water system in Chesebro Road can serve a maximum pad elevation of 1100 feet.

The developer will be required to initiate action through the District to have a Water System Design Report (WSDR) prepared. This WSDR will define demand requirements of the project based on the City approved plan and how the project will be supported by existing potable water system of the District. The District would advocate strict water conservation measures as a condition of project approval. This would include, but not be limited to, fixture design and installation (use of ultra-low flow toilets and showerheads), hot water circulating systems, drought tolerant plantings, efficient irrigation systems and techniques, and maximum use of reclaimed water during and after construction (if available).

Very truly yours,

Neal L. Clover
Civil Engineering Assistant

NLC:nlc



10. Letter from Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Neal L. Clover, October 20, 1999

Response 1

This statements made in this letter are noted. The project would be conditioned to comply with all City standards for water conservation. There is no basis to condition this project to exceed the City standards that all other new projects within the City must comply with. As stated in this letter, the nearest reclaimed water is located at Driver Avenue and Colodny Drive. It is not known when, if ever, this line would be extended the several miles to the project vicinity since other existing homes along Chesebro Road are not conditioned to use reclaimed water in the future. Therefore, it is not appropriate to condition the project to use reclaimed water during or after construction. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

David Anderson

From: Jess Thomas[SMTP:fixequip@pronetusa.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 18, 1999 12:38 PM
To: Dave Anderson
Cc: Mark Dixon
Subject: Tentative track map 52396: adequacy of draft EIR

Old Agoura Homeowners Association review of the draft EIR for Palo Comado Ranch shows the document to be extremely thorough and well researched. We are satisfied with its examination of the project and its alternatives. We would, however, very much appreciate more attention given to traffic generation in the final document. Our experience shows that the newer estate-type homes, such as will result from this project, typically generate significantly more vehicle trips per day than the accepted standard for residential use. The number of outside services and deliveries is much higher than would be expected.

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Jess Thomas, President

11. E-Mail from Old Agoura Homeowners Association, Jess Thomas, November 18, 1999**Response 1**

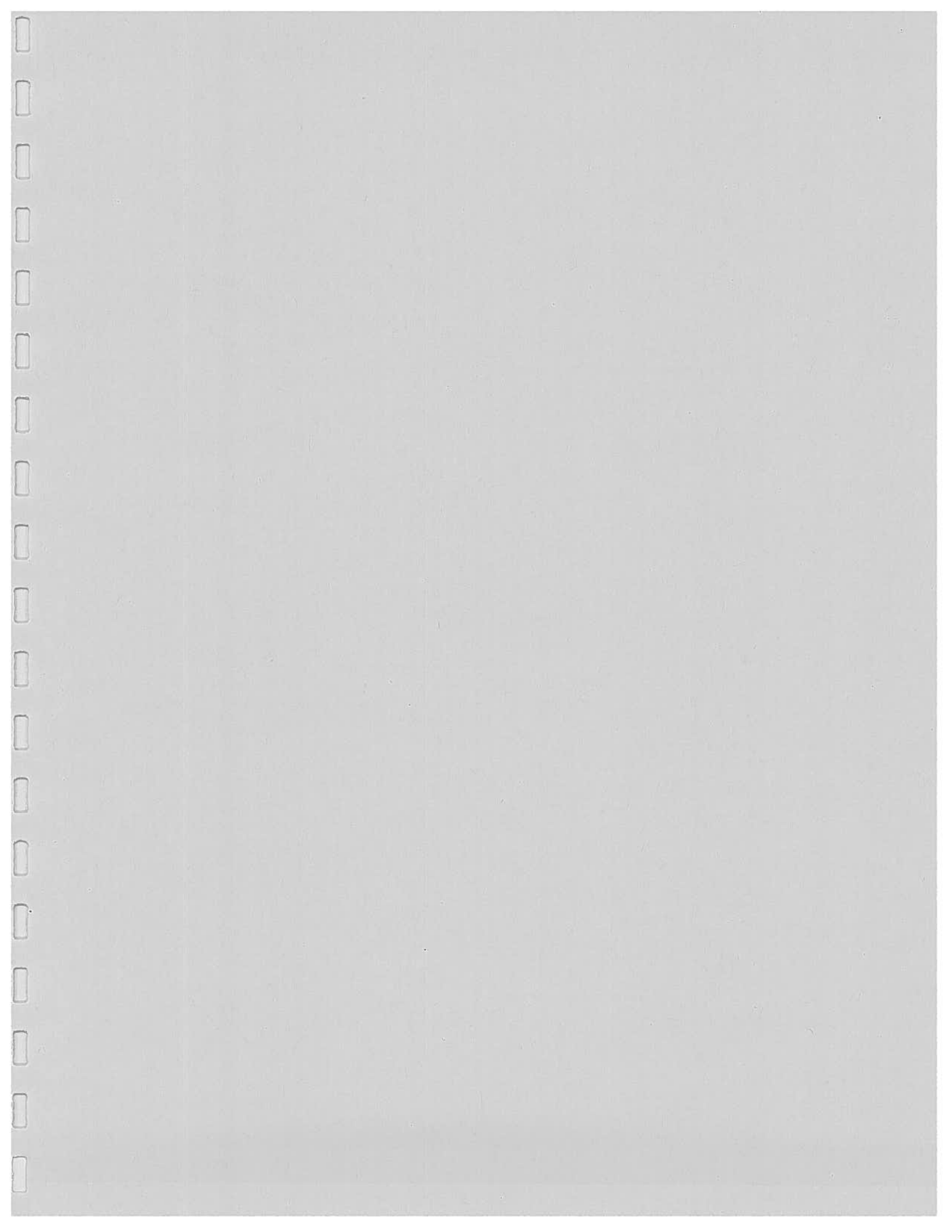
This comment states that the Draft EIR is extremely thorough and well researched. The City of Agoura Hills appreciates this comment. No further response is required given that the comment does not address or question the content of the EIR.

Response 2

The Initial Study indicates that the original 12-unit project would generate approximately 155 average daily trips (ADT), 9 A.M. peak hour trips, and 12 P.M. peak hour trips. The currently-proposed 10-unit project would generate fewer daily and peak hour trips using the same generation rates identified in the Initial Study. However, the commentator is correct in assuming that estate-type homes often generate more vehicle trips than the accepted standard for residential uses. According to the City Traffic Engineer, estate-type homes could generate an average of 14 to 15 trips per day. This would equal 140 to 150 trips per day along Chesebro Road rather than 115. Rather than ADT, the City is most concerned about is peak hour trips.¹ Approximately 10 percent of the project-generated trips would occur during the P.M. peak hour. Fewer trips would occur during the A.M. peak hour. According to the City Traffic Engineer, these 14 to 15 peak hour trips (one trip every four minutes or so) would not significantly impact the operations of Chesebro Road or its intersections with other roadways including Driver Avenue.² The low volume of peak hour trips generated by the project is also substantially below the City's 50 peak hour trip threshold for determining whether a traffic impact analysis is required for a project.

¹ Interview with Ed Klein, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 15, 1999.

² Interview with Ed Klein, City of Agoura Hills, Agoura Hills, California, December 15, 1999.



3.0 REVISED DRAFT EIR PAGES

INTRODUCTION

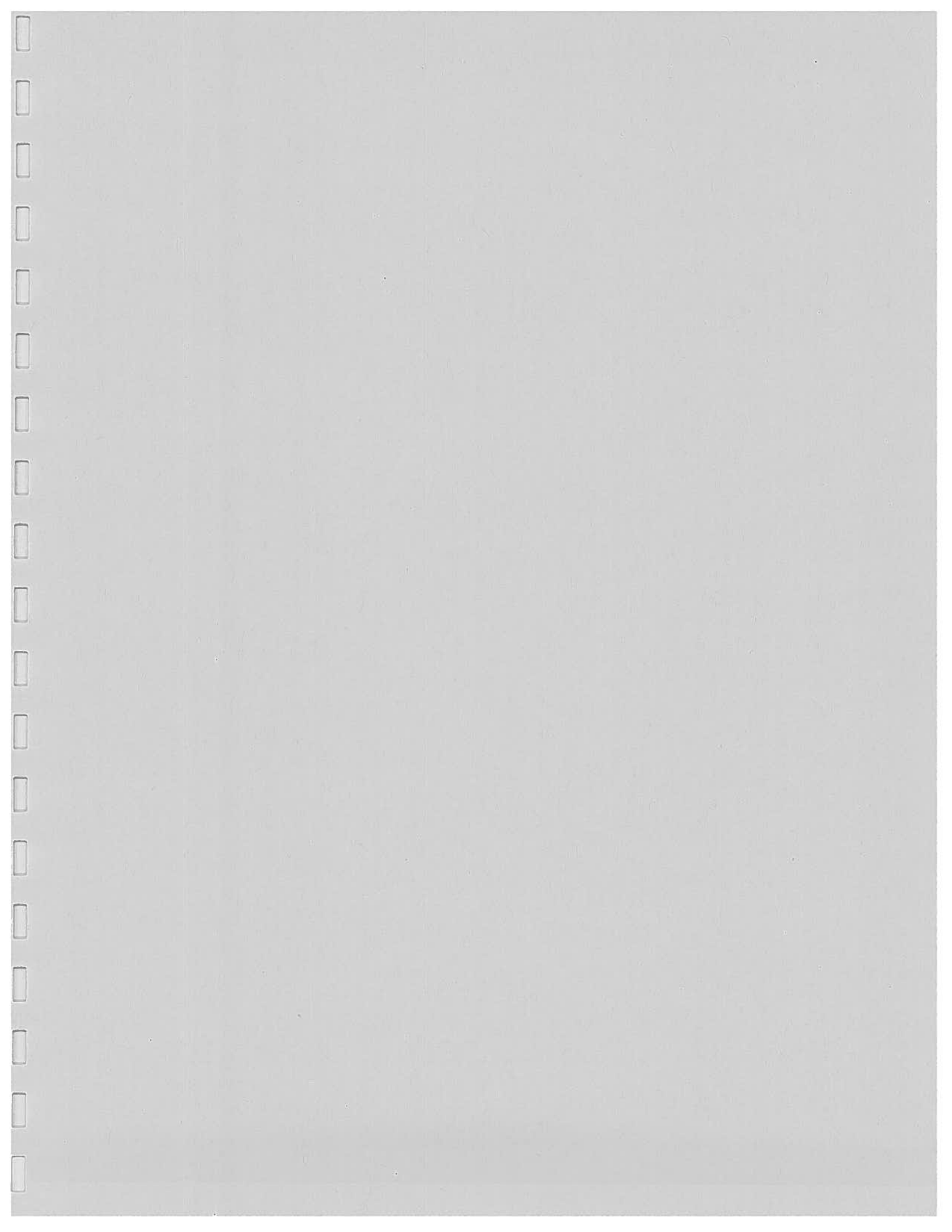
The following pages from the Draft EIR have been revised as a result of City review during the public review period. Only those pages that have been revised are included in this section. All text deletions are shown in strike-out format, and all text additions are underlined. The page numbers shown on the following pages follow the page numbering of the Draft EIR rather than this Final EIR. None of the revisions that have been incorporated into the Final EIR affect the analysis completed, nor the conclusions presented in the Draft EIR regarding the environmental impact of the proposed project.

Table 2.0-1 (continued)
Summary of Project Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts

Project Impacts	Recommended Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
4.2 HYDROLOGY (continued)	<p>4.2-2. In order to ensure that no post-development water quality impacts to the Palo Comado Creek occur, individual-lot owners <u>developer of the tract</u> shall identify specific and appropriate BMPs <u>to be implemented</u> (as approved by the City) for the each lot under review prior to issuance of grading permits. These BMPs shall become requirements of such grading permits.</p> <p>4.2-3. All finished floor elevations of on-site residences shall be, at minimum, one foot above the 100-year flood elevation of Palo Comado Creek. Prior to final design approval of each residential lot, the lot developer shall demonstrate, through a HEC-2 study, that grading impacts comply with the City's floodplain ordinance.</p> <p>4.2-4. The project applicant shall obtain a Conditional Letters of Map Revision (CLOMR) relative to adjustments to the 100-year FIMA <u>FEMA</u> flood plain prior to construction <u>recording</u> of the proposed residential units <u>tract map</u>.</p> <p>4.2-5. Bridge structures shall be designed and constructed <u>in accordance with the City's floodplain ordinance</u> to not minimize <u>affects to</u> the 100-year flood flow of the spanned watercourse.</p> <p>4.2-6. The Homeowners Association for the subdivision shall be responsible for maintaining all fossil filters or other pre-discharge filtering devices designed to intercept first-flush stormwater flows. The Association shall also be responsible for maintaining the natural condition of the portion of Palo Comado Creek within the subdivision boundary. No small drains, impoundments, or in-creek modifications shall be permitted within Palo Comado Creek.</p>	
4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	<p>The proposed project would convert 20.6 acres of the site (about 23 percent) from a natural to a developed condition. Fuel modification activities related to these developments would disturb as much as an additional 2.8 acres, bringing the total conversion to 23.4 acres, or 26 percent, of the property. This conversion would significantly impact four of the 10 plant communities on the site. No oak trees or special-status plant species would be removed.</p> <p>4.3-1. No grading, excavating, or paving shall occur within the protected zone (area encompassing the dripline plus an additional five feet) of oak trees without a permit issued by the Department of Planning and Community Development or Planning Commission. In addition, all other provisions of the City's tree removal ordinance shall be complied with.</p> <p>4.3-2. Nothing shall be nailed to any oak tree during the construction period.</p>	<p>Not Significant for project-specific impacts</p> <p>Significant cumulative impacts</p>

**Table 2.0-1 (continued)
Summary of Project Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts**

Project Impacts	Recommended Mitigation Measures	Residual Impacts
4.4 LAND USE		
<p>The proposed project would be consistent with all of the City's applicable environmental goals and policies concerning the project site. It would be consistent with all but one of the applicable General Plan policies, each of the six SEA Design Compatibility Criteria, and the applicable Zoning Ordinance standards. The project is also consistent with all of the applicable policies identified in the Open Space and Conservation Element complies with the provisions of Section 65567 of the <i>California Government Code</i>.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are required or recommended.</p>	<p>Not Significant</p>
4.5 AESTHETICS AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER		
<p>The proposed project is consistent with the low density rural character of Old Agoura. Grading for the project would be minimal and balanced on site on a lot specific basis. There would be no alteration of the existing on site natural topographic features and watercourse (i.e. Palo Comado Creek), and no oak trees would be removed. The project would not obstruct views of the prominent hillsides of the project site and would not impact views of primary ridgelines of the City.</p>	<p>No mitigation measures are required or recommended.</p>	<p>Not Significant</p>



- 4.2-1. A stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) shall be completed, to the satisfaction of the Regional Water Quality Control Board - Los Angeles Region and the City of Agoura Hills. The SWPPP shall include measures to minimize the generation of fugitive dust, prevent erosion and prevent hazardous materials contamination of the Palo Comado Creek during construction. Appropriate specific measures shall be required of each individual lot developer prior to issuance of grading permits for the lot under review.
- 4.2-2. In order to ensure that no post-development water quality impacts to the Palo Comado Creek occur, ~~individual lot owners~~ the developer of the tract shall identify specific and appropriate BMPs to be implemented (as approved by the City) for ~~the each~~ lot under review prior to issuance of grading permits. These BMPs shall become requirements of such grading permits.
- 4.2-3. All finished floor elevations of on-site residences shall be, at minimum, one foot above the 100-year flood elevation of Palo Comado Creek. Prior to final design approval of each residential lot, the lot developer shall demonstrate, through a HEC-2 study, that grading impacts comply with the City's floodplain ordinance.
- 4.2-4. The project applicant shall obtain a Conditional Letters of Map Revision (CLOMR) relative to adjustments to the 100-year ~~FIMA - FEMA~~ flood plain prior to ~~construction~~ recording of the ~~proposed residential units tract map~~.
- 4.2-5. Bridge structures shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the City's floodplain ordinance to ~~not minimize~~ affects to the 100-year flood flow of the spanned watercourse.
- 4.2-6. The Homeowners Association for the subdivision shall be responsible for maintaining all fossil filters or other pre-discharge filtering devices designed to intercept first-flush stormwater flows. The Association shall also be responsible for maintaining the natural condition of the portion of Palo Comado Creek within the subdivision boundary. No small drains, impoundments, or in-creek modifications shall be permitted within Palo Comado Creek.

UNAVOIDABLE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

With proper implementation of the aforementioned mitigation measures, the proposed project would not result in unavoidable hydrologic or water quality impacts. With compliance with the City's flood ordinance and water quality requirements, no cumulative hydrologic or water quality impacts would occur.

- Applicable *General Plan* Policies.
- SEA Design Compatibility Criteria.
- Applicable *Zoning Ordinance* Standards.

Project Impacts

Applicable General Plan Policies

The proposed project's consistency with each applicable policy from the various elements of the *General Plan* is discussed in **Table 4.4-1**. The conclusions identified in the table are discussed below.

One policy (Policy 2.10) from the Land Use Element encouraging the use of extensive landscaping in all new projects would not be considered appropriate for this portion of the Old Agoura area. The existing homes along Chesebro Road generally minimize the use of non-native landscaping and maximize the use of the existing vegetation on their property. This helps to preserve the rustic feel of Old Agoura. The use of extensive landscaping is more appropriate and commonly used in the newer areas of the City.

As shown in **Table 4.4-1**, the proposed project is consistent with all of the other applicable policies. Therefore, the project's impacts under this topic are not considered potentially significant. Also, the proposed project is consistent with all of the applicable policies identified in the Open Space and Conservation Element. The project, therefore, complies with the provisions of Section 65567 of the *California Government Code*.

SEA Design Compatibility Criteria

The General Plan requires that development proposed within an SEA be reviewed for compliance with the following six Design Compatibility Criteria:

1. The development is designed to be highly compatible with the biotic resources within the SEA, and may include the setting aside of appropriate and sufficient undisturbed areas.
2. The development is designed to maintain waterbodies, water courses, and their tributaries in a natural state.
3. The development is designed so that wildlife movement corridors are left in a natural and undisturbed state.
4. The development retains sufficient natural vegetative cover or open spaces to buffer critical resource areas from the proposed uses.

Mitigation Measures/Conditions of Approval	Party Responsible for Implementing Mitigation	Monitoring Action	Enforcement Agency Monitoring Agency Monitoring Phase
<p>4.2 HYDROLOGY</p>			
<p>4.2-1. A stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) shall be completed, to the satisfaction of the Regional Water Quality Control Board - Los Angeles Region and the City of Agoura Hills. The SWPPP shall include measures to minimize the generation of fugitive dust, prevent erosion and prevent hazardous materials contamination of the Palo Comado Creek during construction. Appropriate specific measures shall be required of each individual lot developer prior to issuance of grading permits for the lot under review.</p>	Home Builder	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan Check and Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department RWQCBLAR and Comm. Dev. Department 2. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance of Grading Permits
<p>4.2-2. In order to ensure that no post-development water quality impacts to the Palo Comado Creek occur, individual lot owners/the developer to the tract shall identify specific and appropriate BMPs to be implemented (as approved by the City) for the each lot under review prior to issuance of grading permits. These BMPs shall become requirements of such grading permits.</p>	Home Builder	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan Check and Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance of Grading Permits
<p>4.2-3. All finished floor elevations of on-site residences shall be, at minimum, one foot above the 100-year flood elevation of Palo Comado Creek. Prior to final design approval of each residential lot, the lot developer shall demonstrate, through a HEC-2 study, that grading impacts comply with the City's floodplain ordinance.</p>	Home Builder	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan Check and Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Final Design Approval
<p>4.2-4. The project applicant shall obtain a Conditional Letters of Map Revision (ELOMR) relative to adjustments to the 100-year FEMA-FEMA flood plain prior to construction <u>recording of the proposed residential-units tract map.</u></p>	Home Builder	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan Check and Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance <u>Recordation of Building Permits</u> <u>Tract Map</u>
<p>4.2-5. Bridge structures shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the City's floodplain ordinance to not minimize <u>affects to the 100-year flood flow of the spanned watercourse.</u></p>	Applicant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan Check and Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance of Grading Permits
<p>4.2-6. The Homeowners Association for the subdivision shall be responsible for maintaining all fossil filters or other pre-discharge filtering devices designed to intercept first-flush stormwater flows. The Association shall also be responsible for maintaining the natural condition of the portion of Palo Comado Creek within the subdivision boundary. No small drains, impoundments, or in-creek modifications shall be permitted within Palo Comado Creek.</p>	Applicant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of CC&Rs and Annual Reports 2. Annual Reports 3. Annual Reports 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance of Grading Permits and Annual Reports
<p>4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES</p>			
<p>4.3-1. No grading, excavating, or paving shall occur within the protected zone (area encompassing the dripline plus an additional five feet) of oak trees without a permit issued by the Department of Planning and Community Development or Planning Commission. In addition, all other provisions of the City's tree removal ordinance shall be complied with.</p>	Home Builder	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Field Verification 2. Field Verification 3. Field Verification 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comm. Dev. Department 2. Comm. Dev. Department 3. Prior to Issuance of Grading Permits

