

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES DESCRIPTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Meeting Date: July 6, 2026

PROJECT: Woolsey Canyon Grading Project

Project No.:	PRJ2020-001220-(3)
Permit No.:	SEA-CUP RPPL2021002331 OTP RPPL2021002524 ENV RPPL2023005020
APN:	2017007010, -011, -014, -016, and 018 (On-site parcels); 2017007001, -003, -004, -006, -012, -013, 2017-009-902 and 904 (Off-site parcels)
Address:	24668 Woolsey Canyon Road, West Hills, CA 91304
SEA:	Santa Susana Mountains / Simi Hills
USGS Quad:	Calabasas
Project Applicant:	Menashe Braonstiin
Project Biologist:	Forde Biological Consultants
Staff Planner:	Soyeon Choi
Staff Biologist:	Joseph Decruyenaere / Michael Cady

GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project site is located on five parcels totaling 6.7 acres in Woolsey Canyon. The project seeks to retroactively authorize approximately 16,200 cubic yards of unpermitted fill that resulted in approximately 1.75-acre ground disturbance within the project site, as well as the removal of two oak trees. The disturbed would be utilized for low-intensity, personal agricultural purposes, including a horse corral and a small orchard.

The project also includes corrective and restorative activities to address prior unauthorized grading. These activities include re-grading approximately 12,400 cubic yards of unpermitted fill on site (consisting of 6,200 cubic yards of cut, 3,200 cubic yards of fill, and 3,000 cubic yards of exported), as well as implementation of drainage restoration and improvements, slope stabilization measures, and a total of 6.95-acre active and passive habitat restoration and mitigation across both onsite and offsite parcels. Oak tree impacts will be addressed in accordance with County requirements through replacement planting and monitoring or mitigation fee payment. Collectively, these components are intended to restore natural landforms, improve site hydrology, and enhance biological resources within the project area.

The retroactive unpermitted fill and the proposed grading consist of the following:

- 10,000 cy of the unpermitted fill deposit to remain on the northern portion of the project site and the off-site access road to the east.
- 6,200 cy of the unpermitted fill to be removed from the central and southern portion of the project site and used for slope stabilization within the off-site access road to the east.
- 3,000 cy of the unpermitted fill to be transported off-site.
- Grading restoration, including construction of retaining wall, engineered slope, and earthen berm along the east and southerly edge of the unpermitted fill and the off-site access road.

The proposed drainage stabilization consists of the following:

- Removal of an existing culvert on APN -003, an existing brick wall on APN -016, and an existing storm drainpipe on APN -018 to re-establish the natural stream alignment and flow.
- Stabilization of drainage by installing rock energy dissipators, trench drains, and catch basins on the off-site access road.
- Restoration of wastewater run-off in and from the project site per the natural topography of the area along the entire stream in both on-site and off-site parcels.

The proposed habitat restoration mitigation consists of the following:

- Restoration Site 1: A 0.31-acre of Stream Restoration Area over the entire length of the historical stream in both on-site and off-site parcels by removing fill materials and revegetation.
- Restoration Site 2: A 1.32-acre of fill and fill removal in southeastern portion of the on-site parcels and restoration with native species.
- Restoration Site 3: A 0.31-acre of the rock outcrop restoration and revegetation in the central area of the Project Site and the adjacent off-site parcels.
- Restoration Site 4: A 5-acre of major rock outcrops and their bases to be clear of all non-native plant species by hand.

SITE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND HABITAT

The project site is located at the western edge of the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area. It is also adjacent to the Dayton Canyon Open Space and is near the Santa Susana Field Laboratory Conservation Easement Area.

In the order of largest to smallest, the proposed project site currently supports the following vegetation communities and land covers: laurel sumac scrub, chamise chaparral, disturbed, rock outcrop, mustards and ruderal forbs, chamise chaparral – rock complex, California sagebrush, laurel sumac scrub-rock complex, thick-leaf yerba santa scrub, stream, California live oak woodland, ornamental trees, and fountain grass swards. The stream and rock outcrop are SEA Resource Category 1. California live oak woodland and thick-leaf yerba santa scrub are SEA Resource Category 3. The remaining native

vegetation communities are SEA Resource Category 4, and the non-native communities and land cover are Category 5.

The project is located within the Bell Creek Watershed. One drainage crosses from west to east in the middle portion of the project site. Waterflow in the drainage is ephemeral and does not support riparian vegetation. One vernal pool was identified within a rock outcrop along the southern boundary of the project site.

Two hundred and ninety-eight Santa Susana tarplant were documented on the project site. The species was associated with the rock outcrops. Following the surveys for the project, the following eight special-status plant species have moderate to high potential to occur: Brewer's calandrinia, Catalina mariposa lily, Plummer's mariposa lily, Parry's spineflower, western dichondra, decumbent goldenbush, Ojai navarretia, and California screw moss. Eight coast live oak that meet the SEA Protected Tree size criteria were documented on site.

Diagnostic sign (middens in the rock outcrop) for one special-status wildlife species, San Diego desert woodrat, was observed on the project site. The following sixteen special-status wildlife species are expected to occur: Gertsch's socialchemmis spider, Santa Monica grasshopper, crotch bumble bee, coast horned lizard, San Diegan tiger whiptail, southern California legless lizard, coast patch-nosed snake, San Bernardino ringneck snake, turkey vulture, greater roadrunner, Costa's hummingbird, Allen's hummingbird, Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, Pallid bat, San Diego desert woodrat, and mountain lion. The following 11 special-status wildlife species have a moderate or high potential to occur: trask shoulderband snail, southern shoulderband snail, Santa Monica grasshopper, Santa Monica shieldback katydid, Bell's sage sparrow, lark sparrow, silver-haired bat, western small-footed myotis, long-eared myotis, long-legged myotis, and American badger. A canyon bat was observed roosting in rock fissures and other crevice-associated bat species are expected.

PROJECT IMPACTS TO SEA RESOURCES

The desktop analysis determined that the unpermitted activities resulted in the loss of approximately 21 Santa Susana tarplant, approximately 0.04 acres of stream, 0.31 acres of Rock Outcrop, and two California Live oak trees. It was also determined that the unpermitted activities resulted in the loss of approximately 21 Santa Susana tarplant, approximately 0.04 acres of stream, 0.31 acres of Rock Outcrop, and two California Live oak trees. It was also determined that the activities affected a portion of all the native plant communities within the project site. The impacts to these plant communities and other natural resources equate to the loss of approximately 0.31 acres of SEA Resource Category 1 habitat, approximately 0.09 acres of Category 3 habitat, and approximately 1.22 acres of Category 4 Habitat.

MITIGATION & MINIMIZATION MEASURES

The applicant proposes to designate 6.89 acres of Category 1 Habitat, 0.43 acres of Category 3 Habitat, and 2.44 acres of Category 4 Habitat, for a total of 9.76 acres, which includes all major rock outcrops, all known locations of Santa Susana tarplant, the oak

woodland, and coast live oak trees. Said land would be deed restricted via a conservation easement in favor of the MRCA or similar agency designated by the DRP. The conservation easement would prohibit future development and uses other than open space and limited recreation.

A Restoration and Monitoring Plan will be prepared and implemented to restore the areas of unpermitted impacts. The County will approve the restoration ecologist who prepares the plan and implements it. The restoration areas are categorized as stream areas (Site 1), upland fill and fill removal areas (Site 2), upland road areas (Site 3), and rock outcrops (Site 4). Non-native plant species will be removed using hand-held tools. The plant palette shall consist of native species observed within the project site. Both container stock and hydroseeding would be used. An irrigation system will be installed in all but Site 4. Monitoring after installation is completed will be a minimum of once per month during the first 120 days. Monitoring will then be conducted twice per year thereafter for five years. Success criteria include values for relative cover of native and non-native plants, with invasive plant species needing to be completely eradicated by the end of the five years. Additionally, the restoration sites must survive without irrigation for two years. The monitoring period shall be extended beyond 5 years if success criteria are not met. A report will be prepared and submitted to the County within 30 days of the initial 120-day monitoring period and then annual monitoring reports will be submitted.

To satisfy the oak tree mitigation, the applicant proposes to enter into an agreement with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation (MRCA) or similar agency designated by the DRP, whereby the MRCA or other agency will be responsible for completing the tree mitigation in exchange for a mitigation fee. The MRCA provided an estimate of \$2,000 to \$2,500 per tree (\$40,000 to \$50,000 total) to perform all planting, maintenance, monitoring, and adaptive management for a five-year monitoring period. Adaptive management would include replanting of failed trees until 100 percent survival of self-sufficient trees is reached.

SEA ORDINANCE CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The following discussions list the required SEA Ordinance Findings, followed by Staff's assessment of the proposed Project's consistency with those findings. Pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Section 22.102.080.D, the applicant shall substantiate the following facts:

1. The proposed development is highly compatible with the SEA Resources, including the preservation of natural open space areas and providing for the long-term maintenance of ecosystem functions.

The proposed project, including retroactive authorization of unpermitted fill and site restoration, is compatible with the SEA resources as it prioritizes the restoration of the open space. The project primarily consists of corrective grading, drainage restoration, slope stabilization, and habitat restoration measures designed to remediate prior disturbances and re-establish natural landforms and hydrologic processes. Native revegetation and invasive species removal will enhance habitat quality and support biological resources within the SEA. In addition, long-term use is limited to low-intensity, personal agricultural activities, including a small orchard and equestrian use, which are

consistent with the rural character of the area. The incorporation of restoration and conservation measures will ensure protection of SEA resources and support the long-term maintenance of the ecosystems function.

2. The proposed development avoids or minimizes impacts to the SEA Resources and wildlife movement through one or more of the following:

- a. Avoiding habitat fragmentation;**
- b. Minimizing edge effects; or**
- c. Siting development in the least sensitive location.**

The proposed project minimizes impacts to the SEA resources and wildlife movement by avoiding habitat fragmentation and minimizing edge effects. The project site is limited to previously disturbed areas that are in the northern portion of the project site near Woolsey Canyon Road, with the southern portion of the project site being natural open space areas that are adjacent or near large continuous blocks of open space that are preserved. The project also incorporates various habitat restoration measures that will restore native vegetation that can be used by wildlife. The proposed personal agricultural activities will be contained within the existing disturbed area stabilized by earthen berm and engineered grading. The project does not introduce new barriers, such as fencing, so wildlife movement is not expected to be substantially affected by the long-term use of the site. In addition, restoration of natural drainage features and slope stabilization will further improve ecological function and reduce disturbance to adjacent habitat areas and minimize edge effects.

3. Important habitat areas are adequately buffered from development by retaining sufficient natural vegetation cover and/or natural open spaces and integrating sensitive design features.

Important habitat areas are adequately buffered from development through retention and restoration of native vegetation and preservation of natural open space. The stream across the on-site and off-site parcels will be restored to allow natural water flow to the extent possible. All unpermitted fill materials, the brick wall in the upstream of the fill area, the culvert at Bang Road will be removed. The area between Bang Road and the brick wall will be restored with a four-foot-wide bed and banks and a 10-foot buffer.

The project limits development to previously disturbed areas. The proposed personal agricultural uses will be located in the deposited fill area located to the north of the stream. The surrounding area where rock outcrop and deposit of unpermitted fill occurred would be restored by incorporating slope recontouring, drainage restoration, and native revegetation. This would help maintain separation between active use areas of the project site and the remaining natural open space areas. These measures provide functional buffers that protect habitat quality, reduce edge effects, and support the long-term integrity of ecological resources within the SEA.

4. The proposed development maintains ecological and hydrological functions of water bodies, watercourses, and their tributaries.

The proposed project restores the hydrological functions of the stream that was affected by historical disturbance. The 1,550-foot-long stream across both on-site and off-site

parcels will be restored to allow natural water flow to the extent possible. All unpermitted fill materials, the brick wall and storm drainpipe in the upstream of the fill area, the culvert at Bang Road will be removed. The area between Bang Road and the brick wall will be restored with a four-foot-wide bed and banks and a 10-foot buffer. The project also consists of drainage improvement and stabilization efforts, such as installation of trench drains and catch basins in order to re-establish the natural stream alignment and flow throughout both on-site and off-site parcels that have been affected by the unpermitted ground disturbance activities.

5. The proposed development ensures that roads, access roads, driveways, and utilities do not conflict with Priority Biological Resources, habitat areas, migratory paths, or wildlife corridors; and

The project site is accessed through an existing access road on off-site parcels to the east. The access road will be stabilized with appropriate grading, retaining walls, and back drain. The majority of the access road is part of the historically disturbed area and connects to a private street, Woolsey Canyon Road, which serves the neighborhood. There is an existing water well, and no other utilities are required or proposed for the project.

6. The proposed development promotes the resiliency of the SEA to the greatest extent possible. For purposes of this finding, SEA resiliency is not promoted when the proposed development may cause any of the following:

- a. Significant unmitigated loss of contiguity or connectivity of the SEA;**
- b. Significant unmitigated impact to a Priority Biological Resource;**
- c. Removal of habitat that is the only known location of a new or rediscovered species; and/or**
- d. Other factors as identified by SEATAC.**

The project promotes the resiliency of the SEA resources by restoring impacted areas to native vegetation and preserving onsite vegetation in perpetuity. The proposed development is limited to a low-intensity, small-scale personal agricultural use, so the long-term use of the project site is not expected to substantially degrade the remaining natural open space areas onsite and in adjacent lands. The rest of the project consists of comprehensive restoration and mitigation measures that will enhance onsite habitat and provide opportunities for plants and wildlife. The stream affected by historic disturbance will be restored the entire length to allow natural water flow. Rock outcrop will be mimicked as closely as feasible by removing invasive species and unpermitted fill. Two removed oak trees will be mitigated by supplying mitigation fees to support planting and maintaining of 20 trees. Furthermore, a total of approximately 9.76 acres will be preserved using a conservation easement to mitigate for impacts to SEA Resources.

PROJECT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The County recommends the following changes to be memorialized with revisions or addendum of the report or project prior to public hearing for the project:

1. The Biota Report indicates that floodlights have been installed and shine directly on rock outcrops where bats had previously been found roosting. As such, the following recommendation pertaining to lighting should be added:

SEATAC RECOMMENDATIONS

April 6, 2026

- a. Exterior lighting shall be minimized and restricted to low intensity features that are shielded and directed downward and away from native habitats to minimize impacts on wildlife.
2. For the preservation areas, signage will be established that indicates the sensitivity of the habitats being preserved.

Staff Recommendation:	<u>X</u> Consistent	<u>X</u> Consistent after Modifications & Bio Report Completion
	<u> </u> Inconsistent	
