

MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW BOARD (ERB)
Unincorporated Coastal Zone, Santa Monica Mountains, Los Angeles County
In-Person Meeting of April 21, 2025

Present:

ERB Members

Travis Longcore, Ph.D.
Dan Cooper, Ph.D.
Richard Ibarra
Cameron Robertson (alternate)
Edgar De La Torre (alternate)

Regional Planning Staff

Joseph Decruyenaere, Senior Biologist
Karla Moreno, Biologist
Tyler Montgomery, Principal Planner
Iris Chi, ERB Coordinator

PART I: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Roll call- Travis Longcore, acting chair, requests applicants' permission for two pro tempore ERB members in order to complete quorum. All three applicants were present and agreed to add two planners from the Department of Regional Planning.
2. Coordinator's Report – May be adding a new ERB board member.

PART II: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3. November 18, 2024 ERB meeting minute approval. Vote: Unanimous consent to approve the minutes.

PART III: OLD BUSINESS

PART IV: NEW BUSINESS

4. **Project No.:** PRJ2021-002760
Permit No.: Minor Coastal Development Permit No. RPPL2021010380
APN: 4455-019-004
Address: 24772 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 91302
Location: Cold Creek Canyon Watershed
USGS Quad: Malibu Creek
Applicant: Richard Walker
Project Biologist: R. Mitchel Beauchamp, Pacific Southwest Biological Services, Inc
Staff Planner: Tyler Montgomery
Staff Biologist: Joe Decruyenaere

Project Description:

The applicant proposes the construction of an 5,838-square-foot, 18-foot-4-inch-tall single-family residence with attached two-car garage, attached one-car garage, balconies, driveway and other associated improvements on a 2.4 acre lot in the R-C-20 (Rural Coastal - 20-acre minimum required lot area) Zone. The Project includes 49 cubic yards of cut and 4 cubic yards of fill, with 45 cubic yards of exported soil. The proposed development is located within a 7,000-square-foot building site area. The Project includes a 20-foot-wide pass through driveway with two points of access of Mulholland Highway with a total length of 87 feet. The proposed residence would be constructed on a currently unpermitted graded pad, accessed from Mulholland Highway. The applicant proposes to plant trees on and off site and to mitigate the unauthorized removal of 9 oak trees prior to application submittal and to mitigate the impacts of unauthorized import and disposal of fill material on the project site. ERB review is required because the proposed development is less than

200 feet from mapped H1 and H2 Habitats. The project site is located within the Cold Creek Canyon watershed, which is tributary to Malibu Creek. Mountains Restoration Trust-owned and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy-owned properties are present within 1000 ft but not adjacent to the property, and further than 200 ft. from the proposed residence. The property is designated with the RL20 (Rural Lands - One dwelling unit / 20 acres maximum). The Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program maps the property with H2 and H3 Habitats. The property also includes H1 Habitat Quiet Zone. Fuel Modification will be required in H1 Habitat Quiet Zone, H2 Habitat, and H3 Habitat. Resources: H1 Habitat, H2 Habitat, freshwater forested / shrub wetland, chamise-black sage-laurel shrubland, Cold Creek Canyon Watershed

ERB Comments:

- The project biologist does not agree with the intensity of the plantings proposed on-site, however he agrees with the seed mix recommendations and either selecting an off-site mitigation site or pay an in-lieu mitigation fee.
- ERB agrees the applicant should provide mitigation off-site and should submit a mitigation planting plan for review and approval by the County.
- The applicant questioned where the appropriate receiver site for off-site mitigation would be located. ERB recommends reaching out to a conservancy or non-profit to assist with selecting an appropriate off-site mitigation site.
- Staff biologist clarified the discrepancy between the 90 mitigation trees discussed in the biological report and 95 mitigation trees discussed in the tree report, where the difference of 5 was based on an oak tree encroachment that is no longer part of the project.
- ERB stated that the habitat categories mapped with the project parcel are unclear.
- ERB stated that the current mapping is inadequate and needs to be updated and clarified to reflect the pre-disturbance conditions to better document the impacts related to the violation.

ERB Motion:

Move to accept staff recommendations; to update the map to the pre-disturbed conditions and correct the biological report in order to accept the report; and to not support the approval of project with the current level of on-site mitigation. There may be oak plantings on the southern part of the site but not on the northern part beyond where the oaks are naturally growing. The mitigation oaks will require an off-site agreement with an entity that will preserve the site in perpetuity.

Motion by Longcore, Vote – Ayes: Unanimous

5. **Project No.:** 2017-004216
Permit No.: RPPL2017006847 (Includes Major Coastal Development Permit and Variance)
APN: 4455-058-003
Address: 25531 Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 91302
Location: Malibu Creek (Cold Canyon Creek) Watershed
USGS Quad: Malibu Beach
Applicant: Mr. and Mrs. Randhawa c/o Don Bruckner
Project Biologist: Matthew South, South Environmental
Staff Planner: Tyler Montgomery
Staff Biologist: Karla Moreno

Project Description:

The Applicant proposes the construction of an approximately 5,272-square-foot, two-story, 30-foot-tall single-family residence with attached garage, 440-foot long driveway, and on-site water treatment system (OWTS). A variance is required for the project due to the request to exceed the allowed maximum height of 18 feet along a scenic highway and to exceed the allowed maximum driveway length of 300 feet. The project includes 13,291 cubic yards (cy) of grading (consisting of 12,918 cy of cut and 274 cy of fill, with 12,844 cy of export). The project directly impacts 0.96 acres of H2 Habitat and 0.03 acres of H3 Habitat. Additionally, on-site fuel modification will impact 2.15 acres of H2 Habitat and 0.13 acres of H3 Habitat. Off-site brush thinning will impact 0.78 acres of H2 Habitat and 0.57 acres of H2 habitat. The project fronts Mulholland Highway and access to the proposed development will be taken directly from that street. The project site has multiple streams, that are part of the Malibu Creek Watershed, located across the central and north portion of the parcel. All streams are entirely outside of the project development footprint and associated fuel modification zones. There is a protected open space area managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) west of but not abutting the project parcel and more than 200 ft. from the proposed residence. The surrounding parcels are all zoned R-C-20 (Rural Coastal - 1 dwelling unit / 20acres) and only the neighboring parcel to the east will be subject to off-site brush thinning requirements.

Resources: H2 Habitat, Hoary Leaf Ceanothus-Laurel Sumac Shrubland Association, Malibu Creek Watershed

ERB Comments:

- ERB discussed the easement of the debris basin actively cleared by the County. ERB requested that the re-categorization of habitat be consistent with the recorded easement boundary.
- The applicant sought assurance that they would not need to mitigate for the County's Flood Control District maintenance activities of the debris basin.
- The applicant shared that the unauthorized grading for the pilot road was mitigated previously where the applicant restored the driveway to its previous condition and the driveway is considered H2 habitat.
- ERB discussed an alternative location for the project. Proposing the project location closer to the highway would create new biological disturbances and the slope control and grading would be extreme. ERB agrees with the project's proposed location as the most biologically appropriate.
- Longcore recommends the County and applicant discuss who is fully responsible (including access and potential future damages) for the clearing of the debris basin on the applicant's parcel.

ERB Motion:

- Move to accept staff recommendations and to accept the remapping of the debris basin with the understanding that ongoing disturbance is managed by the County and not the fault of the applicant.

Motion by Longcore, Vote – Ayes: Unanimous

6. **Project No.:** PRJ2023-002436

Permit No.: Major CDP RPPL2023003558, Variance RPPL2023003561 (Driveway), Major CDP RPPL2024003235 (Well exploration)

APNs: 4457-002-053 (on-site),

4447-002-045, 4457-002-054, 4457-002-055 (off site)

Address: None (West Side of Mulholland Highway, South of Francisco Road)

Location: Malibu Creek Watershed

USGS Quad: Malibu Beach

Project Applicant: Martin Rasmussen, Keystone Strategic Partners

Project Biologist: Daryl Koutnik, Environmental Science Associates

Staff Planner: Tyler Montgomery

Staff Biologist: Joe Decruyenaere

Project Description:

The proposed project is the development of a single-family residence on a 6.26-acre parcel (APN 4457-002-053) and associated access driveway over portions of its eastern adjacent parcels (APNs 4457-002-055, 4457-002-054, and 4457-002-045). In addition, a water well and septic system are proposed off-site within parcel APN 4457-002-055 within the access driveway grading limits. The project site is located within the Malibu Creek watershed. There are no properties within 1000 ft of the project site that are protected as open space by local, state, or federal agencies. The project parcel is mapped in the LCP as H1 (California walnut / California sagebrush / giant wild rye woodland/forest association), H2 (greenbark ceanothus shrubland association and laurel sumac shrubland alliance), and H2 High Scrutiny (birch leaf mountain mahogany-greenbark ceanothus shrubland association and laurel sumac-ashy buckwheat shrubland association). In addition to the above plant communities, the proposed access road would also be aligned through stands of vegetation mapped by NPS as California sagebrush / giant wild rye shrubland association and giant wild rye herbaceous association and designated in the LCP as H2 High Scrutiny. Construction of the project as proposed would impact 1.18 acres of H1, 1.00 acre of H2, and 0.32 acres of H3 habitats on and off site. Fuel-modification and off-site brush thinning impacts would amount to 2.41 acres of H2.

Resources: H1 Habitat, H2 Habitat, Malibu Creek Watershed

ERB Comments:

- County Planner clarified the variance is for the length of the driveway exceeding 300 feet and a second Major CDP filed in 2024 is for well exploration which requires a pilot road whose grading exceeds 5,000 cubic yards.
- ERB requested clarification regarding the variance for the proposed driveway. The applicant clarified the variance is for the proposed driveway accessed off Francisco Ranch Road that runs through other privately owned parcels. The proposed road partially deviates from the existing road only at the curve and includes a 40 foot wide easement for any additional grading needed for Fire Department access.
- The project biologist clarified that the LCP habitat mapping and categorization was based on NPS mapping conducted circa 2001 – 02. The vegetation was subsequently altered by a fire in 2008 and has since become dominated by giant wildrye grass as a part of its recovery.
- ERB asked for clarity over language in the report referring to the avoidance of rare or sensitive species during construction activities that may take place when plants are undetectable (such as outside of the blooming season).
- The project biologist responded that the rare plant survey would occur every spring (annually) until construction commences.
- ERB asked about the mitigation measures if a rare or special status species is found. County Biologist recommendations request the development of a mitigation planting plan prior to project approval that would address mitigation of rare or sensitive plants.
- ERB recommended to expand the cumulative impact section of the report.

ERB Motion:

Move to accept staff recommendations and habitat recategorization, to develop a landscaping plan that includes southern California black walnut, and to develop a habitat mitigation and monitoring plan prior to project approval.

Motion by Longcore, Vote – Ayes: Unanimous

PART V: PUBLIC COMMENT

7. Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code. No request for public comments.

PART VI: ADJOURNMENT: Adjournment to 1:00 pm, May 19, 2025.