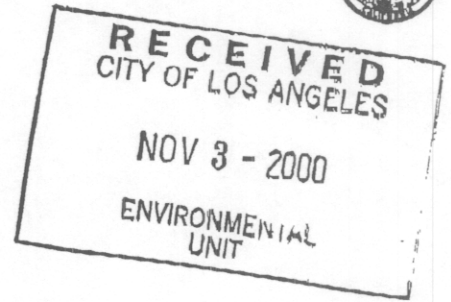


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DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

South Coast Region
4949 Viewridge Avenue
San Diego, California 92123
(858) 467-4201
FAX (858) 467-4239



October 26, 2000

Mr. Lateef Sholebo
City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
221 N. Figueroa St., Room 1500
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Sholebo:

**Draft Environmental Impact Report for
Mission Hills Tentative Tract #52539
SCH # 1999091090, Los Angeles County**

The Department of Fish and Game (Department), has reviewed the Proposed Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for impacts to biological resources. The proposed project includes the subdivision of 28.76 acres of primarily agricultural land interspersed with non-native woodland into 116 single family lots. The proposed project is located at 15065 Mission Hills Road south of the junction of Interstate 405 and 5 freeways in the Mission Hills Community of City of Los Angeles.

The following statements and comments have been prepared pursuant to the Department's authority as Trustee Agency with jurisdiction over natural resources affected by the project (CEQA Section 15386) and pursuant to our authority as a Responsible Agency under CEQA Section 15381 over those aspects of the proposed project that come under the purview of the California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq) and Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.:

Impacts to Biological Resources

1. Breeding Birds - Page 24 of Appendix H of the DEIR states that active bird nest will be avoided by conducting nesting surveys "no earlier than 45 days and no sooner than 20 days prior to construction" and that appropriate buffers around any nests will be provided to avoid take of native birds.
 - a. The Department recommends that nest surveys be conducted no earlier than three days prior to ground disturbance activities. Surveys conducted as early as 45 to 20 days prior to project activities as suggested in the DEIR are likely to miss active nests.
 - b. The Department generally considers the breeding bird season to last from March 1 through August 31. Raptors may commence nesting as early as

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January or February and so nesting surveys for raptors should be planned accordingly for project related disturbances . The Department recommends a 500 foot buffer around any active raptor nest.

2. Canada Goose - The agricultural nature of the existing site and the close proximity of the site to Van Norman Reservoir to the west could make the proposed site an important wintering habitat for the last few remaining wintering Canada geese which return to the San Fernando Valley each fall. The loss of wintering habitat for the Canada goose should be considered a locally significant impact under CEQA and addressed in the DEIR.

Impacts to Riparian Resources

1. Table 1 of appendix H describes a total of .4 acres of mulefat and willow scrub wetlands within the proposed project site which are proposed for grading during project construction. According to the DEIR the willow scrub is associated with a leaking water pipe.
 - a. The Department opposes the elimination of drainages and their conversion to subsurface drains and therefore recommends that impacts to drainages and associated riparian resources be avoided. If the mulefat scrub is associated with an on site drainage, a steambled alteration agreement would be required between the applicant and the Department for any impacts to riparian habitat within Department jurisdiction. Please contact Ms. Betty Courtney at (661) 263-8306 to discuss this further.
 - b. Regardless of association with a drainage, mulefat and willow trees, whether natural or created are considered facultative wetland indicator species. It is the Department's policy that "projects that impact wetlands are damaging to fish and wildlife resources if they result in a net loss of wetland acreage or wetland habitat value" (Page 510, Fish and Game Code). If wetlands cannot be avoided, the Department recommends that loss of wetlands be compensated for at a 1:1 ratio in the form of on-site wetland creation. Often wetland creation may be incorporated into the drainage plan for the site within areas of undisturbed open space. Wetland creation should take place within an area which will not require future flood control maintenance or other disruptive landscape management. It appears that the size of the proposed project site would offer ample opportunity for the creation of .4 acres of mulefat/willow scrub wetland habitat.

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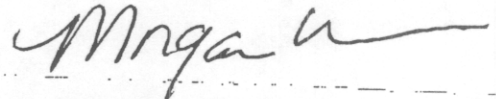
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Mr. Lateef Sholebo
October 26, 2000
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Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Questions regarding this letter and further coordination on these issues should be directed to Mr. Scott Harris, Associate Wildlife Biologist at (818) 360-8140.

Sincerely,



Mr. C.F. Raysbrook
Regional Manager

Morgan Wehtje for

cc: Mr. Scott Harris
Ms. Morgan Wehtje
Ms. Betty Courtney
Department of Fish and Game

State Clearinghouse
Sacramento, California