



May 26, 2016

Carlos Mendoza  
Cambria Community Services District  
1316 Tamsen Drive, Suite 201  
Cambria, California 93428

**RE: Results of Nesting Bird Survey in Support of Fiscalini Ranch Forest Test Plots, Cambria, California**

Dear Mr. Mendoza,

This memorandum is being provided by Terra Verde Environmental Consulting (Terra Verde) to summarize the results of a nesting bird and general wildlife survey conducted at the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve on behalf of the Cambria Community Services District on May 24, 2016. The Friends of Fiscalini Ranch have acquired a Minor Use Permit (MUP) and Coastal Development Permit (CDP) #2016-025\_PDH, authorizing the implementation of a forest fuels reduction test program within the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve. The biological surveys were conducted in support of the planned forest thinning activities and removal of downed woody debris. All proposed work locations were surveyed in accordance with mitigation requirements of the MUP/CDP. Specifically, the survey fulfills the requirements of BIO/MM-14 and BIO/MM-25, which describe the pre-construction survey obligations.

### **Survey Requirements**

**BIO/MM-14:** *Prior to initiation of site disturbing activities, the applicant shall retain a qualified biologist to conduct a pre-activity survey for active nests, dens, or burrows. The survey shall be conducted within 30 days prior to proposed site disturbance and construction activities. Results of the survey shall immediately be submitted to the CDFW as necessary. The survey report shall include the date of the survey, methods of inspection, and findings. Disturbance of any active nest, den, or burrow shall be prohibited.*

- a. *If active burrows of Monterey dusky-footed woodrats are found within proposed activity areas during the survey, the biologist shall establish an appropriate buffer area to protect the nest(s). No site disturbance shall occur within the buffer area until a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is obtained from CDFW. An alternative to buffer area is to disassemble nests by hand outside of the nesting season (February through September) and allow the woodrats to leave the site.*
- b. *If the pre-construction survey finds potential American badger dens, they shall be inspected to determine whether they are occupied. The survey shall cover the entire property, and shall examine both old and new dens. If potential badger dens are too long to completely inspect from*



*the entrance, a fiber optic scope shall be used to examine the den to the end. If a fiber optic scope is not available, occupation of the den can be determined by partially obscuring the den entrance with sticks and leaves to indicate animal passage into and out of the den and dusting the den entrance with a fine layer of dust or tracking material for three consecutive nights and examining the following mornings for footprints. Inactive dens may be excavated by hand with a shovel to prevent re-use of dens during construction. If badgers are found in dens on the property between February and July, nursing young may be present. To avoid disturbance and the possibility of direct take of adults and nursing young, and to prevent badgers from becoming trapped in burrows during construction activity, no grading shall occur within 100 feet of active badger dens between February and July. If badger dens are found on the property during the pre-construction survey, the CDFW wildlife biologist for the area shall be contacted to review current allowable management practices.*

**BIO/MM-25:** *Prior to site disturbance, if site disturbance is scheduled to occur during the typical bird nesting season (February 15 to September 1), a qualified biologist shall be retained to conduct a preconstruction survey (approximately one week prior to construction) to determine presence/absence for tree-nesting birds within riparian corridors and woodland areas, and ground-nesting birds within annual grasslands onsite. If no nesting activities are detected within the proposed work area, noise-producing tree removals may proceed. If nesting activity is confirmed during preconstruction nesting surveys or at any time during the monitoring of construction activities, work activities shall be delayed within 500 feet of active nests until the young birds have fledged and left the nest. In addition, the results of the surveys will be passed immediately to the CDFW, possibly with recommendations for buffer zone changes, as needed, around individual nests. Tree removal shall be monitored for nesting birds and documented by the biological monitor regardless of time of year.*

The nesting bird, American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and woodrat (*Neotoma* spp.) surveys were conducted in each of three one-acre test plots on May 24, 2016. The surveys were conducted by Terra Verde biologist Halden Petersen between 7:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. Prior to the survey, all trees proposed for trimming/removal were clearly marked in the field. Weather conditions were cool and calm with high visibility, suitable for the detection of avian species and other wildlife. The survey area encompassed a maximum distance of 500 feet from the edge of proposed tree thinning activities. Each survey area was scanned for avian breeding behavior and active nests, sign and suitable dens for American badger, and woodrat houses within the impact area.

Two active avian nests were identified, one in Test Plot 1 and one in Test Plot 2. Several woodrat (*Neotoma* spp.) houses were identified in each of the three test plots. No American badger, potential dens, or sign of this species was observed. High visibility green flagging was used to mark the locations of each resource identified and, where applicable, a buffer area was delineated with flagging. No special-status avian species or other sensitive wildlife species were observed during the surveys.

The following summarizes the locations of the two avian nests by test plot location:

**Test Plot 1:**

One great-horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) nest was observed with one owlet branching in the canopy of a Monterey pine located in the northeast corner of the plot. It is recommended that no thinning activities occur within a minimum 100-foot buffer around this nest. In order to accommodate relocation of the proposed work boundary for nest avoidance, the survey area was expanded to the west in this area. Direct impacts to the nest are not anticipated if the 100-foot no-work buffer is established, and secondary impacts associated with noise are unlikely to occur at this distance. A biological monitor should be present during work for this test plot.

**Test Plot 2:**

One active dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*) nest was identified in the incubation stage near the plot center. This species is a ground-nesting bird and may be subject to disturbances associated with heavy timber work. A no-work buffer of at least 25 feet is recommended for this nest; however, depending on the specific intensity of work required in the area (e.g., burning and felling), a larger avoidance area may be warranted and recommended. A biological monitor should be present during work for this test plot.

Several other avian species covered under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code were noted during the surveys and it is important to note that nesting may continue to occur throughout the typical nesting season (February 15 to September 1).

Woodrat houses were identified intermittently throughout each of the survey areas: one in Test Plot 1, four in Test Plot 2, and three in Test Plot 3. As described in the MUP, impacts to each house must be avoided during activities. However, activities are anticipated to be successfully carried out with no impacts to this species with the implementation of an environmental awareness training provided to the crews prior to work and an avoidance buffer around each house, as described in MUP BIO/MM-18. Generally, a buffer of 20 feet is sufficient to protect woodrat houses, individuals, and their potential young; crews should leave intact all wood/debris touching and/or supporting each house. Woodrat house numbers are expected to remain constant; however, new houses may develop before the onset of activity and as new areas may be exposed, crews may encounter previously unidentified houses. All woodrat houses encountered during work, whether previously identified or not, must be avoided.

If work is planned to occur in Test Plots 1 and 2 while the two avian nests described above are still active, it is recommended that concurrence from California Department of Fish and Wildlife be received prior to starting activity within 500 feet of each nest. Alternatively, work should be delayed to avoid activity for approximately one month, while the young are given time to fledge from the nests.



Photographs of the two active nests and a typical woodrat house are provided as an attachment.

If you should have any questions and/or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at [hpetersen@terraverdeweb.com](mailto:hpetersen@terraverdeweb.com) or (714) 309-1962.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Halden Petersen".

Halden Petersen  
Biologist

Attachment A: Site Photographs



## **Attachment A: Site Photographs**

**ATTACHMENT A: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS**



**Photo 1:** View of great-horned owl (circled) in tree canopy with adjacent nest (05-24-16).



**Photo 2:** Dark-eyed junco nest with eggs present (05-24-16).



**Photo 3:** Woodrat house (center) with green flagging surrounding (05-24-16).