



Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve

Post Office Box 1664

Cambria, California 93428

805.927.2856

December 7, 2015

Airlin Singewald, Senior Planner
Department of Planning and Building
County of San Luis Obispo
976 Osos Street, Room 300
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Via email: asingewald@co.slo.ca.us

Subject: Response to Rincon Consultants Peer Review of the *Project Description – Minor Use Permit Application for the Monterey Pine Forest Fuel Reduction Project*

Dear Mr. Singewald,

I have included my responses to the evaluation and recommendations of Rincon Consultants below:

1. Requested information included in letters furnished to the County.
2. The gully repair has been eliminated as part of the project due to cost and permitting considerations.
3. Invasive removal has been added as a separate phase in the MUP.
4. Letter from Registered Professional Forester furnished to County.
5. Additional species noted were evaluated. None have been observed on the Ranch and Monterey pine forest does not provide suitable habitat for them.
6. Confirmed that proposed avoidance and minimization measures are consistent with Master EIR with one exception. MUP modified to include requirement, rather than option, for nesting bird survey.
7. Master EIR does not identify this area as a seasonal wetland. Identification made on the basis of plants found in the area. No direct or indirect impacts are anticipated. Precautions already exceed EIR requirements.
8. Special status plants cannot be identified until spring as they are not presently visible. No change.
9. Master EIR only requires avoidance and mitigation measures for red legged frog within 100 feet of Santa Rosa Creek. USFWS defines Primary Constituent Elements of critical upland habitat for red legged frog as “within 200 feet of the edge of riparian vegetation or drip line surrounding aquatic and riparian habitat”.ⁱ The project area does not meet this criteria.

10. Recommendation addressed in MUP. Survey reports and buffer recommendations will be furnished to County, rather than incorporated in the MUP, as they will take place in the future.
11. Plant and wood rat nest surveys will be performed by trained naturalists. Monarch and nesting bird surveys will be performed by qualified biologists.
12. Survey results will be furnished to the County.
13. Timeframes included in MUP.
14. Additional precautions and notification incorporated in MUP for white-tailed kite.
15. As noted above, the Master EIR does not identify this area as a seasonal wetland. Precautions already exceed EIR requirements.
16. MUP modified to include additional clarification.
17. MUP already notes that any invasive plants with seeds will be burned or bagged for disposal offsite. Although I concur it is best to remove plants before seeding and we will make every effort to do so, it is not always feasible. In most cases, it is better to treat invasives with a less than optimal approach as opposed to not treating at all.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Holly Sletteland".

Holly Sletteland
Project Manager
Fiscalini Ranch Preserve

ⁱ United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Habitat Definitions for California Red-Legged Frog*, <http://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/habitat-definitions-california-red-legged-frog> (Dec. 6, 2015).