

Attachment A – Environmental Findings

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

I. CEQA FINDINGS

- A.** Find that the Planning Commission has reviewed and considered the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project dated July 2025 on file with Planning & Development Services as Environmental Review Number PDS2015-ER-15-08-006 before making its recommendation on the project.
- B.** Certify that the EIR dated July 2025 on file with Planning & Development Services as Environmental Review Number PDS2015-ER-15-08-006 has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the State CEQA Guidelines, that the EIR was presented to the Board of Supervisors and that the Board of Supervisors reviewed and considered the information contained therein before approving the project, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board of Supervisors.
- C.** Adopt the findings concerning mitigation of significant environmental effects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091. (Attachment A-1)
- D.** Adopt the Statement of Overriding Considerations pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15093. (Attachment A-1)
- E.** Adopt the Decision and Explanation Regarding Recirculation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(e). (Attachment A-1)
- F.** Adopt the Mitigation and Monitoring Program as incorporated into the project conditions of approval pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15091(d).

II. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

- A.** Find that the proposed project is consistent with the Resource Protection Ordinance (County Code, section 86.601 et seq.). The project has been determined to qualify for additional encroachment on the steep slopes areas that are identified in the Resource Protection Study Steep Slope Waiver dated July 17, 2015. In addition, the four findings described in Section 86.604(e) (3) can be made that would allow the project to be granted a waiver from the easement requirements of RPO. This conclusion is based on the information provided by the Resource Protection Study Steep Slope Waiver dated July 17, 2015 that demonstrates the following: (1) the slope areas in which a waiver is being requested is physically separated from other areas of steep slope and is visually insignificant and indistinguishable; (2) the project is concurrently requesting a rezone to S88- Specific Plan in which the lots will be .5 acres or smaller; (3) the encroachment waiver is consistent with the goals and objectives of the applicable community plan; and (4) a "D" designator would be applied to the site that would require future site plan review.

- B.** Find that plans and documentation have been prepared for the proposed project that demonstrate that the project complies with the Watershed Protection, Stormwater Management, and Discharge Control Ordinance (County Code, section 67.801 et seq.).



County of San Diego

MARK WARDLAW
DIRECTOR

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
5510 OVERLAND AVENUE, SUITE 310, SAN DIEGO, CA 92123
www.sdcountry.ca.gov/pds

PLEASE NOTE THAT A FORMAL APPLICATION FOR A HABITAT LOSS PERMIT HAS NOT BEEN FILED AT THIS TIME. THE FOLLOWING IS A DRAFT FORM OF DECISION FOR A HABITAT LOSS PERMIT SHOWING THE FORMAT AND POSSIBLE CONDITIONS FOR A FUTURE HABITAT LOSS PERMIT. BECAUSE A FORMAL APPLICATION HAS NOT BEEN FILED, CERTAIN DATES, FINDINGS AND OTHER INFORMATION IS ABSENT FROM THE DRAFT FORM OF DECISION, THIS INFORMATION WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL FORM OF DECISION.

DATE (to be determined)

David Kovach
RCS Harmony Partners, LLC
2305 Historic Decatur Rd, Ste. 100
San Diego, CA 92106

DRAFT Habitat Loss Permit

APPLICATION NUMBER: HLP XX-XXX

ASSOCIATED PERMIT(S): PDS2015-GPA-15-002; PDS2015-SP-15-002; PDS2015-TM-5600; PDS2015-REZ-15-003; PDS2015-MUP-15-008; PDS2015-ER-15-08-006

NAME OF APPLICANT: RCS Harmony Partners, LLC

DESCRIPTION/LOCATION OF LOSS:

The proposed Harmony Grove Village South project consists of 111 acres located southeast of the intersection of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive, in the San Dieguito Community Planning area, within unincorporated San Diego County (APN 235-011-06, 238-021-08, -09 and -10). The proposed project includes 453 single- and multi-family dwelling units in five neighborhoods, a 5,000 square foot community/clubhouse building, park and recreational uses, open space, a potential on-site wastewater reclamation facility, and related roadway and utility infrastructure improvements.

The proposed project is for a Habitat Loss Permit and will impact 10.4 acres of Diegan coastal sage scrub (CSS) and a single pair of California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) as shown on the attached Habitat Loss Exhibit (Figure 1).

DECISION:

The Director of Planning & Development Services has approved your application for a HABITAT LOSS PERMIT. This Habitat Loss Permit approval does not become final until both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) concur with the Director's approval, by either of the following:

1. Concurrence implied by allowing a 30-day period, initiated by their receipt of this decision, to lapse without presenting written notification to the County that the decision is inconsistent with the Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS) Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Process Guidelines (CDFW, November 1993) or any approved subregional mitigation guidelines; or
2. Granting concurrence through written notification to the County prior to the conclusion of the 30-day period, initiated by their receipt of this decision, that the project is consistent with the Southern California CSS NCCP Process Guidelines or any approved subregional mitigation guidelines.

Pending the issuance of an associated Grading Permit, Clearing Permit or Improvement Plan from the County of San Diego, this Habitat Loss Permit allows for the loss of the above-described coastal sage scrub habitat (see attached Habitat Loss Exhibit) and incidental take of the California gnatcatcher for a period of one calendar year commencing the day concurrence is given by both the USFWS and CDFW. If the loss of habitat, as authorized by this Habitat Loss Permit, has not occurred within this one-year period, this Habitat Loss Permit and the authorization for the loss of coastal sage scrub habitat expires.

Pending the issuance of an associated Grading Permit, Clearing Permit or Improvement Plan from the County of San Diego, this Habitat Loss Permit allows for this additional loss of coastal sage scrub as described above and shown on the attached Habitat Loss Exhibit for a period of one calendar year commencing the day concurrence is given by both the USFWS and CDFW. If the loss of habitat, as authorized by this Habitat Loss Permit, has not occurred within this one-year period, this Habitat Loss Permit and the authorization for the loss of coastal sage scrub habitat that was not previously cleared, graded or removed expires.

This Habitat Loss Permit cannot be relied upon for the clearing, grading or removal of any vegetation until a valid Grading Permit, Clearing Permit or Improvement Plan has been issued from the County of San Diego authorizing such vegetation removal. Furthermore, use and reliance upon this Habitat Loss Permit cannot occur until all of the requirements as specified within the "Conditions of Approval" section of this permit have been satisfied.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

The following conditions are being placed on the Tentative Map (PDS2015-TM-5600). For the final Habitat Loss Permit, the list of conditions will be modified to require satisfaction of all conditions prior to use and reliance on the HLP.

M-BI-1a Prior to issuance of a grading permit, the Project applicant shall preserve 34.8 acres of on-site biological open space (BOS) determined to support sensitive species and habitat functions and values contiguous with the Del Dios Highlands Preserve to the south through the establishment of a conservation easement and the preparation of a Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife) to address long-term monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives, in perpetuity, by a qualified entity approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies.

The 34.8-acre BOS is depicted on Figure 1-9 and Figure 2.3-5. The habitat types within the BOS are summarized within Table 11 of Appendix E. The RMP shall address the location of the mitigation sites that meet the specific mitigation requirement for the type of habitat (e.g., in-kind habitat preservation, no net loss, presence of special status species, etc.) within the Project site. The open space easement shall be owned by a conservancy, the County, or other similar, experienced entity subject to approval by the County. Funding shall be provided through a non-wasting endowment, Community Facility District or other finance mechanism approved by the County. Should a regional entity to manage biological open space be formed, the natural habitat areas within the Project site could be dedicated to that entity and managed as part of an overall preserve system for northern San Diego County.

M-BI-1b Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 10.4 acres of impacts to Diegan coastal sage scrub occupied by coastal California gnatcatcher shall occur at a 2:1 ratio for a total of 20.8 acres of occupied habitat through a combination of on-site preservation of 0.5 acre, on-site restoration and preservation of 1.8 acres, and off-site preservation of 18.5 acres through land acquisition and/or purchase of conservation bank credits, as specified below and approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies as part of the required HLP process.

On-site restoration shall include 1.8 acres of Diegan coastal sage scrub. The restoration shall include preparation and implementation of a restoration plan approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies, to include directives for native container planting and seeding using locally sourced material, temporary irrigation, and monitoring and maintenance for a minimum five-year period until performance standards and success criteria approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies have been met. The 1.8 acres of restored coastal sage scrub shall be placed within BOS easement, along with the 0.5 acre of avoided coastal sage scrub, and managed in perpetuity in accordance with M-BI-1a.

An additional 18.5 acres of occupied, Intermediate Value or High Value coastal sage scrub, and/or other like-functioning habitat as approved by the County and

Wildlife Agencies, shall be provided through one or a combination of the following:

- Off-site preservation of mitigation land, through the recordation of a biological open space easement, and preparation of an RMP to address long-term monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives, in perpetuity, approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. To the extent the land is available for preservation, off-site mitigation shall occur within land designated as PAMA in the Draft MSCP North County Plan and located in the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove Planning Area, northern coastal foothills ecoregion. The location shall be deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies. Long-term management shall be funded through a non-wasting endowment in an amount determined through preparation of a Property Assessment Record (PAR) or similar method for determining funding amount. The open space easement shall be owned by a conservancy, the County or other similar, experienced entity subject to approval by the County. Should a regional entity to manage biological open space be formed, the natural habitat areas within the Project site could be dedicated to that entity and managed as part of an overall preserve system for northern San Diego County.
- If demonstrated to the satisfaction of the County and Wildlife Agencies that off-site preservation of mitigation land is not feasible to fulfill all or a portion of mitigation obligations, then the Project shall include purchase of occupied coastal sage scrub credits at an approved conservation bank, such as the Red Mountain Conservation Bank, Buena Creek Conservation Bank, or other bank deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies.

To further prevent inadvertent direct impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher individuals during construction, no grading or clearing shall occur of occupied Diegan coastal sage scrub during the species' breeding season (February 15 – August 31). All grading permits, improvement plans, and the final map shall state the same. If clearing or grading would occur during the breeding season for the gnatcatcher, a pre-construction survey shall be conducted to determine whether gnatcatchers occur within the impact area(s). To avoid take under the federal ESA, impacts to occupied habitat shall be avoided. If there are no gnatcatchers nesting (includes nest building or other breeding/nesting behavior) within that area, grading and clearing shall be allowed to proceed. If, however, any gnatcatchers are observed nesting or displaying breeding/nesting behavior within the area, construction in that area shall be postponed until all nesting (or breeding/nesting behavior) has ceased or until after August 31. (See also M-BI-4 for mitigation for indirect noise effects.)

M-BI-1c

Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to less than 0.01 acre of mule fat scrub and 0.71 acre of southern riparian forest suitable for least Bell's vireo shall occur at a 3:1 ratio through one or a combination of the following: on- and/or off-site establishment, re-establishment, rehabilitation, enhancement and preservation of riparian habitat and/or other like-functioning habitat; and/or off-

site purchase of riparian habitat mitigation and/or other like-functioning habitat at an approved mitigation bank in the local area, such as the Brook Forest Mitigation Bank, San Luis Rey Mitigation Bank, or other location deemed acceptable by the County and Regulatory Agencies (USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW), as applicable. The establishment/creation or re-establishment component must be at least 1:1, while the remaining 2:1 can be restoration and enhancement.

To further prevent inadvertent direct impacts to least Bell's vireo individuals during construction, no grading or clearing shall occur within riparian habitat during the breeding season of the least Bell's vireo (March 15 – September 15). All grading permits, improvement plans, and the final map shall state the same. If clearing or grading would occur during the breeding season for the least Bell's vireo, a pre-construction survey shall be conducted to determine whether vireos occur within the impact area(s). To avoid take under the federal and California ESAs, impacts to occupied habitat shall be avoided. If there are no vireos nesting (includes nest building or other breeding/nesting behavior) within that area, grading and clearing shall be allowed to proceed. If, however, any vireos are observed nesting or displaying breeding/nesting behavior within that area, construction shall be postponed until all nesting (or breeding/nesting behavior) has ceased or until after September 15. (See also M-BI-4 for mitigation for indirect noise effects.)

M-BI-2a Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to seven summer holly and 1,963 wart-stemmed ceanothus individuals shall occur at a minimum ratio of 3:1 for summer holly and 1:1 for wart-stemmed ceanothus through the preservation of at least 21 summer holly and 1,963 wart-stemmed ceanothus within the BOS easement, (which includes preparation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives) described above in M-BI-1a.

BIO-2b Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to 44.2 acres of non-native grassland that provides suitable nesting and foraging habitat for several bird species, including raptors, shall occur at a 0.5:1 ratio through the preservation of 0.2 acre on site within the BOS easement, (which includes preparation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives) as required by M-BI-1a, in addition to one or a combination of the following: off-site preservation of 21.9 acres of grassland habitat and/or other like-functioning habitat through the recordation of a biological open space easement, and the preparation of an RMP to address long-term monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives, in perpetuity, approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. To the extent the land is available for preservation, off-site mitigation shall occur within land designated as PAMA in the Draft MSCP North County Plan and located in the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove Planning Area, or northern coastal foothills ecoregion. The location shall be deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies. The proposed open space easement shall be owned by a conservancy, the County or other similar, experienced entity subject to approval by the County. Should a regional entity to manage biological open space be formed, the natural habitat areas within the Project site could be dedicated to that entity and managed as part of an overall

preserve system for northern San Diego County. If demonstrated to the satisfaction of the County and Wildlife Agencies that off-site preservation of mitigation land is not feasible to fulfill all or a portion of mitigation obligations, then the Project shall include purchase of 21.9 acres of grassland credits or like-functioning habitat at an approved conservation bank such as the Brook Forest Conservation Bank or other location deemed acceptable by the County. (See also M-BI-9 addressing breeding season avoidance.)

- M-BI-2c** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to yellow-breasted chat nesting and foraging habitat, including less than 0.01 acre of mule fat scrub and 0.71 acre of southern riparian forest, shall be provided at a 3:1 ratio through implementation of mitigation M-BI-1c. (See also M-BI-9 addressing breeding season avoidance.)
- M-BI-3a** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for loss of foraging area that could impact long-term survival of County Group 2 animals shall be provided through implementation of mitigation for impacts to 44.2 acres of non-native grassland at a 0.5:1 ratio, as described in M-BI-2b.
- M-BI-3b** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to yellow warbler nesting and foraging habitat, including less than 0.01 acre of mule fat scrub and 0.71 acre of southern riparian forest at a 3:1 ratio, shall be provided through implementation of mitigation M-BI-1c. (See also M-BI-9 addressing breeding season avoidance.)
- M-BI-3c** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for loss of raptor foraging habitat shall be provided through implementation of mitigation for impacts to 44.2 acres of non-native grassland at a 0.5:1 ratio, as described in M-BI-2b.
- M-BI-4** If operation of construction dozers, excavators, rock crushers, pile drivers or cast-in-drilled-hole equipment occurs during the breeding seasons for the coastal California gnatcatcher (February 15 to August 31), nesting raptors (January 15 to July 15), or least Bell's vireo (March 15 to September 15), pre-construction survey(s) shall be conducted by a qualified biologist as appropriate prior to issuance of a grading permit, to determine whether these species occur within the areas potentially impacted by noise. If it is determined at the completion of pre-construction surveys that active nests belonging to these sensitive species are absent from the potential impact area, construction shall be allowed to proceed. If pre-construction surveys determine the presence of active nests belonging to these sensitive species, then operation of the following equipment shall not occur within the specified distances from an active nest during the respective breeding seasons: a dozer within 400 feet; an excavator within 350 feet; rock crusher equipment within 1,350 feet; a breaker within 500 feet; a pile driver within 2,600 feet; and cast-in-drilled holes equipment within 350 feet. All grading permits, improvement plans, and the final map shall state the same. Operation of construction dozers, excavators, rock crushers, pile drivers, cast-in-drilled-hole equipment and other noise-generating activities shall: (1) be postponed until a qualified biologist determines the nest(s) is no longer active or until after the respective breeding season; or (2) not occur until a temporary noise barrier or berm is constructed at the edge of the development footprint

and/or around the piece of equipment to ensure that noise levels are reduced to below 60 dBA or ambient. Decibel output will be confirmed by a County-approved noise specialist and intermittent monitoring by a qualified biologist to ensure that conditions have not changed will be required. If pre-construction surveys identify coastal California gnatcatcher, nesting raptors, or least Bell's vireo, blasting will be restricted to the non-breeding season for the identified birds (September 1 to February 14 for coastal California gnatcatcher; July 16 to January 14 for nesting raptors; and September 16 to March 14 for least Bell's vireo) or be completed using wholly chemical means.

- M-BI-5a** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for impacts to less than 0.01 acre of mule fat scrub and 0.71 acre of southern riparian forest shall occur at a 3:1 ratio as specified in M-BI-1c, above.
- M-BI-5b** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 10.4 acres of impacts to occupied Diegan coastal sage scrub shall occur at a 2:1 ratio as specified in M-BI-1a and M-BI-1b, above.
- M-BI-5c** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 4.5 acres of impacts to coastal sage-chaparral transition shall occur at a 2:1 ratio through one or a combination of the following: off-site preservation of 9.0 acres of coastal sage-chaparral scrub and/or other like-functioning habitat, through the recordation of a biological open space easement, and the preparation of an RMP to address long-term monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives, in perpetuity, approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. To the extent the land is available for preservation, off-site mitigation shall occur within land designated as PAMA in the Draft MSCP North County Plan and located in the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove Planning Area, or northern coastal foothills ecoregion. The location shall be deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies. The open space easement shall be owned by a conservancy, the County or other similar, experienced entity subject to approval by the County. Should a regional entity to manage biological open space be formed, the natural habitat areas within the Project site could be dedicated to that entity and managed as part of an overall preserve system for northern San Diego County. If demonstrated to the satisfaction of the County and Wildlife Agencies that off-site preservation of mitigation land is not feasible to fulfill all or a portion of mitigation obligations, then the Project shall include purchase of 9.0 acres of coastal sage-chaparral scrub credits or like-functioning habitat at an approved mitigation bank such as the Red Mountain Conservation Bank, Buena Creek Conservation Bank, Brook Forest Conservation Bank, or other location deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies.
- M-BI-5d** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 15.6 acres of impacts to southern mixed chaparral shall occur at a 0.5:1 ratio through the preservation of a minimum 7.8 acres on site within BOS easement, (which shall include preparation and implementation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives), as required by M-BI-1a.
- M-BI-5e** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 44.2 acres of impacts to non-native grassland shall occur through implementation of M-BI-2b, above.

- M-BI-5f** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, mitigation for 0.2 acre of impacts to upland coast live oak woodland shall occur at a 3:1 ratio through the preservation of 0.6 acre on site within BOS easement, (which shall include preparation and implementation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives) as required by M-BI-1a.
- M-BI-6a** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, demonstration that regulatory permits from the USACE and RWQCB have been issued or that no such permits are required shall be provided to the County. Impacts to 0.31 acre of USACE/RWQCB-jurisdictional wetland waters of the U.S./State shall be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio as described in M-BI-1c, above, unless otherwise required by the USACE and RWQCB. Impacts to 0.03 acre of USACE/RWQCB-jurisdictional non-wetland waters of the U.S./State shall be mitigated at a 1:1 ratio through the preservation of a minimum 0.03 acre on site within BOS easement, (which shall include preparation implementation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives) as described in M-BI-1a, unless otherwise required by the USACE and RWQCB. If required by the USACE and/or RWQCB during regulatory permitting for the Project, alternative mitigation shall be provided through purchase of mitigation credits at the Brook Forest Mitigation Bank, San Luis Rey Mitigation Bank, or other location deemed acceptable by the USACE and RWQCB.
- M-BI-6b** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, demonstration that regulatory permits from CDFW have been issued or that no such permits are required shall be provided to the County. Impacts to 0.80 acre of CDFW-jurisdictional areas will be mitigated as follows. Impacts to less than 0.01 acre mule fat scrub and 0.71 acre southern riparian forest shall be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio, as described in M-BI-1c, unless otherwise required by CDFW. Impacts to 0.05 acre of CDFW-jurisdictional coast live oak woodland and 0.04 acre of CDFW-jurisdictional streambed shall be mitigated at a 1:1 ratio through the preservation of a minimum 0.05 acre of CDFW-jurisdictional coast live oak woodland and 0.04 acre of CDFW-jurisdictional streambed on site within BOS easement, (which shall include preparation of an RMP and monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives) as described in M-BI-1a, unless otherwise required by CDFW. If required by CDFW during regulatory permitting for the Project, alternative mitigation shall be provided through purchase of mitigation credits at the Brook Forest Mitigation Bank, San Luis Rey Mitigation Bank, or other location deemed acceptable by CDFW.
- M-BI-6c** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, impacts to 0.72 acre of RPO wetland (less than 0.01 acre mule fat scrub, 0.71 acre southern riparian forest, and 0.01 acre RPO-jurisdictional coast live oak woodland) shall be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio with at least 1:1 creation. Impacts to mule fat scrub and southern riparian forest shall be mitigated as described in BIO-1c, above. Impacts to 0.01 acre RPO coast live oak woodland shall be provided through purchase of establishment or re-establishment mitigation credits at the Brook Forest Mitigation Bank, San Luis Rey Mitigation Bank, or other location deemed acceptable by the County.

M-BI-7 Prior to issuance of a grading permit, impacts to 0.31 acre of federal wetlands shall be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio as described in M-BI-5a and M-BI-6a, above, unless otherwise required by USACE.

M-BI-8 Prior to issuance of a grading permit, impacts to 0.72 acre of RPO wetland shall be mitigated at a 3:1 ratio as described in M-BI-5a and M-BI-6c, above.

M-BI-9 No grubbing, clearing, or grading shall occur during the general avian breeding season (February 15 – August 31). All grading permits, improvement plans, and the final map shall state the same. If grubbing, clearing, or grading would occur during the general avian breeding season, a pre-construction survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine if active bird nests are present in the affected areas. If there are no nesting birds (includes nest building or other breeding/nesting behavior) within this area, clearing, grubbing, and grading shall be allowed to proceed. If active nests or nesting birds are observed within the area, the biologist shall flag the active nests and construction activities shall avoid active nests until nesting behavior has ceased, nests have failed, or young have fledged.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS:

A. CEQA Findings

TO BE PROVIDED

B. FINDINGS MADE IN SUPPORT OF THE ISSUANCE OF THE HABITAT LOSS PERMIT:

The following findings are made based upon all of the documents contained in the record for this project, and pursuant to Section 86.104 of County of San Diego Ordinance No. 8365 (N.S.) and Section 4.2.g of the CSS NCCP Process Guidelines (CDFW, November 1993):

Finding 1.a: The habitat loss does not exceed the five percent guideline.

The proposed project will impact 10.4 acres of Diegan coastal sage scrub (CSS) and a single pair of California gnatcatcher (*Poliioptila californica californica*) outside of the adopted MSCP boundaries. As of February 9, 2013, the approved CSS losses for the entire unincorporated County outside the MSCP boundaries total 1,187.52 acres. The total loss allowed under the 5 percent guideline is 2,953.30 acres. After including the loss of 10.4 acres from the project, the cumulative loss of 1,197.92 acres would not be in excess of the County's 5 percent habitat loss threshold. No impact would occur.

Unincorporated Area CSS Cumulative Losses

Total loss allowed under five percent guideline:	2953.30 acres
Cumulative loss of CSS to date:	1187.52 acres
Net loss due to this project:	10.4 acres
Total cumulative loss:	1197.92 acres
Remaining loss under five percent guideline:	1755.38 acres

Finding 1.b: The habitat loss will not preclude connectivity between areas of high habitat values.

The Project abuts existing residential uses to the east and west, and will abut equestrian park elements of Harmony Grove Village once constructed (Figure 1). Residential uses are more prominent to the immediate west of the site near Cordrey Drive, whereas to the east they are more rural and limited to a few scattered residences and narrow driveways. The southern portions of the site facilitate east-west wildlife movement through a contiguous block of habitat and the eastern boundary of the site facilitates north-south movement along a constrained habitat linkage. Wildlife also move east-west within the Escondido Creek corridor in the northern portion of the site. The existing residential uses and construction of the Harmony Grove Village development limit wildlife connectivity to the north, east, and west.

The Project would conserve 34.8 acres of land in the southern portion of the site in a biological open space easement, thus continuing to allow for wildlife to access the Project site from the south, east, and west. The Project would also remove the existing low-water crossing at Escondido Creek, replace it with a bridge that will span the Creek, and restore the channel and habitat at the crossing, thereby enhancing wildlife movement along the Escondido Creek corridor.

While the project site itself does not function as a corridor, the eastern edge of the site likely contributes to north-south wildlife movement that occurs through the general area referred to as West Ridge, which would connect known coastal California gnatcatcher occurrences north of Escondido Creek to other known occurrences south and southeast of the site within the Del Dios Highlands Preserve. There is an area of high value gnatcatcher habitat about half a mile northeast of the site (County 2008b). The high value habitat area is an isolated island preserve within Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District open space (Figure 1). The project site is separated from this area by Harmony Grove Village developments and local roadways, although a constrained and fragmented connection of scrub and chaparral habitat exists to the general northeast, east, and southeast of the site.

A general assessment of off-site lands situated along the constrained linkage was conducted based on surveys and review of aerial imagery. The Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District island preserve represents the northern limit of the constrained linkage section that was assessed (Figure 1). The West Ridge represents the approximate center of the linkage. Lands to the south within Del Dios Highlands Preserve and further to the southeast toward Lake Hodges represent the southern limit of the linkage section.

The northern limit at the Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District island preserve supports CSS and coastal sage-chaparral on moderate to steep slopes, with evidence of previous disturbance. This is the area of high value based on the habitat evaluation model, although portions of the habitat appear to be disturbed and no gnatcatcher records are reported at this location. The southern tip of this area is characterized by severe slopes from previous mining activities. Moving south from the Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District island preserve, the connection of habitat is broken by existing developments. Low- and poor-flying birds,

such as gnatcatcher, likely have two avenues of movement at this break point as they continue south toward Escondido Creek and the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space. They could continue directly south, along lands on the north and west side of Harmony Grove Road, or they could continue directly southeast, along lands on the south and east side of Harmony Grove Road.

The avenue of movement directly south of the Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District island preserve eventually leads to another island preserve within Harmony Grove Village open space, but the path is interrupted by existing graded pads, road developments, and residential developments that range 400 feet to 1,000 feet in length along the movement path. Once at the second Harmony Grove Village island preserve, the habitat is composed of CSS and coastal sage-chaparral on moderate to steep slopes. This area is not identified as high value habitat on the habitat evaluation model, although gnatcatcher records are reported at this location. Moving south toward the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space, gnatcatchers cross Harmony Grove Road, which averages approximately 30 feet in length, before entering the Escondido Creek riparian corridor and undeveloped scrub and chaparral within the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space. These areas are not identified as high value habitat and no gnatcatcher records are reported at these locations.

The movement avenue directly southeast of the Harmony Grove Village and Rincon del Diablo Water District island preserve crosses Harmony Grove Road and eventually leads to the Escondido Creek riparian corridor, with access to larger blocks of undeveloped scrub and chaparral on the south and east sides of the Creek. These areas are also not identified as high value habitat and no gnatcatcher records are reported at these locations. This path is interrupted by existing roadway and abandoned industrial developments approximately 30 feet to 400 feet in length. Once across these developments, gnatcatchers can continue south and east within Escondido Creek riparian habitat or the adjacent scrub and chaparral within the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space.

Once at the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space, birds would continue south and southeast toward the West Ridge. This north-south trending movement avenue is characterized by scrub and chaparral on moderate slopes, with portions constrained by several narrow driveways and rural residences. The undeveloped areas are characterized by broken and intact stands of CSS, coastal sage-chaparral, and mixed chaparral on moderate slopes. None of the areas are identified as high value habitat and no gnatcatcher records are reported. The total width of the avenue, including the existing undeveloped habitat, driveways, and rural residences, ranges from approximately 1,500 feet to 2,500 feet across the general area east of the site. The scrub and chaparral along the eastern boundary of the site is situated along the westernmost edge of this avenue. As depicted on Figure 1, the on-site CSS in this area is considered to be of intermediate value due to it being less fragmented than other on-site scrub and due to the presence of a confirmed gnatcatcher breeding territory. Additional CSS, coastal sage-chaparral, and mixed chaparral occurs off-site to the east toward the West Ridge and along the north-south constrained linkage avenue. Properties along this avenue are either conserved within the Escondido Creek Conservancy open space, built-out to zoning designations with existing rural residences, or characterized by rugged terrain and steeper slopes, which present a

significant constraint to future developments. As such, additional developments within the properties east of the site are not expected.

Once in the vicinity of the West Ridge, birds would continue to the general south, southeast, and southwest within a large and contiguous habitat block that includes the Del Dios Highlands Preserve and Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. This represents the southern terminus of the constrained linkage. Most of the habitat is mixed chaparral with smaller pockets of CSS and coastal sage-chaparral. None of the areas are identified as high value gnatcatcher habitat, although scattered gnatcatcher records are reported further south and southeast of the project site. The project's biological open space would provide increased habitat connectivity in this area and contribute additional open space preserve to the existing contiguous block (Figure 1).

Movement function along the eastern edge of the site will be conserved within thinned native vegetation fuel modification zones, thereby conserving some functionality of the habitat and minimizing the impact. Figure 13 from the project's Biological Resources Report depicts the fuel modification zones for the project. The fuel modification recommendations are further described in the project's Fire Protection Plan. The outermost fuel modification zone 2 represents areas supporting existing native habitat that would be thinned. Fuel modification zone 2 areas along the eastern boundary of the project range in width from 50 feet to 170 feet. Where existing CSS occurs within fuel modification zone 2, it would be subject to thinning and would be expected to maintain some functionality for gnatcatchers and other wildlife. Fuel modification zone 1 areas are proposed inside of the thinned native zone 2 and would include landscaping using native scrub plant species and irrigation. Fuel modification zone 1 areas along the eastern boundary of the project are 100 feet wide. Considering the width of these areas and that native scrub plants are being proposed in the landscape plant palettes, these areas would be expected to also provide some functionality for gnatcatchers and other wildlife. With implementation of these project design features, some habitat functions and values would be conserved and the impacts on CSS and gnatcatcher would be minimized. Gnatcatchers and other wildlife would still be able to move unobstructed and utilize habitat further to the east of the site near the West Ridge area (Figure 1).

Impacts to on-site CSS would be minimized through a combination of design features, on-site restoration, and preservation. The impacts would be further mitigated through additional off-site preservation. As stated above, some of the impacted habitat would occur within thinned native vegetation fuel modification zones, thereby conserving some functionality of the habitat and minimizing the impact. The Project would further utilize native scrub species in the landscape palette to the extent allowed to meet fire and landscape requirements, thereby replacing some additional functionality on site and minimizing the impact. Additional areas within the Project temporary impact footprint would be restored to CSS and placed within biological open space, thereby replacing some of the habitat loss and minimizing the overall impact to the habitat on site. Last, the Project would preserve additional off-site habitat that will be occupied by gnatcatcher and much larger in size and of equivalent or superior quality, function, and value compared to that being impacted by the project.

As demonstrated, the site is not adjacent to areas of high-value CSS and will not interfere with a regional wildlife corridor or linkage. The CSS on site, and that in the vicinity along the constrained linkage, is composed of relatively small, fragmented stands and larger islands of CSS. Based on survey results and known records, the CSS does not support high numbers of gnatcatchers or a significant population relative to other locations in the Harmony Grove and Elfin Forest area. Further, there are no large blocks of high value habitat further to the north that the constrained linkage would connect to; lands further to the north are urbanized. Therefore, the project will not preclude connectivity between areas of high habitat values.

Finding 1.c: The habitat loss will not preclude or prevent the preparation of the subregional NCCP.

The Project would occur within areas identified as PAMA under the Draft MSCP North County Plan; however, Project implementation would not preclude or prevent finalizing and adoption of this Plan. The project will result in preservation of 34.8 acres of on-site open space and 51.5 acres of off-site open space, for a total of 86.3 acres of open space preserve located in PAMA.

The Project abuts existing residential uses to the east and west, and will abut equestrian park elements of Harmony Grove Village once constructed. The Project's conservation design is consistent with the targets for the region. The Project contributes 34.8 acres of preserved land to the Del Dios Highlands Preserve-Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve habitat block, including expansive chaparral and smaller pockets of oak woodland and CSS habitat occupied by ashy spike-moss (*Selaginella cinerascens*), San Diego sagewort (*Artemisia palmeri*), summer holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *diversifolia*), and wart-stemmed ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*). This contribution would expand regional live-in habitat placed in preservation and conserve east-west movement functions across the southern portions of the Project site, from West Ridge over to Escondido Creek. The design would also not prevent north-south access to Escondido Creek, as alternative travel routes and a regional corridor exists further to the east of the site.

Conserving habitat blocks within and maintaining unobstructed access between the Del Dios Highlands Preserve, Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve, and Escondido Creek corridor are key targets for the Draft MSCP North County Plan. The Project would contribute biological open space immediately adjacent to the Del Dios Highlands Preserve-Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve habitat block and would enhance the Escondido Creek corridor through the removal of barriers to wildlife movement and restoration of habitat.

With respect to the specific, local conservation targets identified in the Draft MSCP North County Plan circulated for public review in 2009, the Project would be consistent with the conservation goals and objectives for the Harmony Grove Core Area, as summarized below.

Conservation Goal / Target Summary	Project Consistency
Goal 1 – Protect Encinitas baccharis and wart-stem lilac, particularly dense stands.	Encinitas baccharis does not occur on site. The Project would conserve 21,150 individuals and 91% of the on-site population of 23,113 wart-stemmed ceanothus within biological open space.
Goal 2 – Minimize impacts to chaparral on mafic soils supporting sensitive plant species, such as Parry's tetracoccus.	Parry's tetracoccus does not occur on site. The Project minimizes impacts and has been specifically designed to avoid and preserve on-site stands of chaparral supporting other sensitive plant species. The chaparral on site was thoroughly analyzed and determined not to have characteristics of mafic chaparral. Nevertheless, the highest quality chaparral supporting the most abundance and diversity of sensitive species will be preserved in biological open space.
Goal 3 – Protect cliff-faces utilized by sensitive species.	Cliff face habitat does not occur on site.
Goal 4 – Protect the Escondido Creek floodplain, conserve riparian and upland habitat along Escondido Creek, and maintain natural flow regimes.	The Project has been specifically designed to protect and enhance the Escondido Creek floodplain, with avoidance buffers of 100 feet from the edge of riparian canopy protected by an additional 100 feet of limited building zone easement, for a total setback of 200 feet. The Project would enhance the biological and hydrologic function of Escondido Creek at the Country Club Drive crossing to a condition superior to what currently exists.
Goal 5 – Maintain connectivity, particularly east-west, along Escondido Creek canyon. Maintain connectivity for wildlife movement of large and medium sized mammals between preserved habitats.	The Project conserves east-west connectivity along Escondido Creek canyon by maintaining natural habitat and not further constraining widths beyond that which already exists. The Project will further remove the existing low-water crossing and improve the hydrological and biological connectivity. The Project conserves wildlife movement patterns for large and medium sized mammals across the southern portion of the site and within existing preserved lands and rural-zoned parcels immediately east of the site to access Escondido Creek.
Goal 6 – Removal of invasive, non-native species to enhance habitat quality along Escondido Creek.	The Project includes active management of biological open space areas and would enhance the biological and hydrologic function of Escondido Creek.

Goal 7 – Link future preserves to create a large contiguous preserve area.	The Project contributes biological open space that is contiguous with existing core preserve area for the Del Dios Highlands Preserve and Elfin Forest Recreational Area. The Project does not impact existing linkages to the east that provide connection to existing preserves along Escondido Creek and within Harmony Grove Village to the north.
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With respect to local preserve design configuration, wildlife will still have access to and from Escondido Creek and core habitat within the Del Dios Highlands Preserve and Elfin Forest Recreational Area. Species, such as gnatcatcher and mule deer, will still be able to migrate and disperse through the local area. The Project site does not serve as the only area of movement to and from these areas and would not preclude wildlife from accessing key resources in the local area. The Project proposes on-site biological open space preservation and off-site preservation of habitat with equivalent or superior functions and values compared to that which will be lost by the Project.

The majority of Project impacts are restricted to non-native grassland that had been previously disturbed and subject to incompatible lands uses for many years. This grassland is identified as PAMA and high value habitat under the Draft North County Plan. The grassland provides open undeveloped land adjacent to the Escondido Creek corridor; however, it does not support critical populations of species or provide an abundance of food, shelter, or other biological resources. The grassland lacks an abundance of cover and landscape features (e.g., ridgelines, gullied land, linear stands of vegetation, drainage features, etc.) typically associated with wildlife travel routes and movement corridors. The grassland provides available space for animals commonly occurring in the region and foraging habitat for raptors. Impacts to grassland, which constitute the majority of PAMA on the Project site, would be mitigated in accordance with standard ratios at off-site locations to the satisfaction of PDS and the Wildlife Agencies, and would not preclude or prevent approval and adoption of the Draft North County Plan.

One of the key targets for the Draft North County Plan and preserve assemblage for PAMA is gnatcatcher. The Project site supports CSS within PAMA; however, the site is not vital to support a viable population of gnatcatchers in perpetuity, considering only a single breeding pair was found on site in 2014. The Draft MSCP North County Plan California Gnatcatcher Habitat Evaluation Model ranks the site as having no value to the species for nesting (County 2008b). Portions of the site facilitate gnatcatcher movement in the local area, but those portions are not critical and alternative dispersal habitat within PAMA is located to the east of the site. Impacts to CSS, which constitute PAMA on the Project site, would not jeopardize the gnatcatcher or preclude or prevent approval and adoption of the Draft North County Plan.

The viability of off-site conserved lands as habitat and movement corridors for wildlife, including the Harmony Grove Village open space, Escondido Creek Conservancy open space, and Del Dios Highlands Preserve, would not be adversely affected by the Project. Off-site conserved lands within the Harmony Grove Village and Escondido Creek Conservancy open space are part of a constrained linkage of open space areas

in the local area that do not extend across the Project site. Scrub and chaparral habitat situated at the eastern boundary of the Project site occur along the western edge of a portion of this linkage. Additional habitat occurs further to the east that facilitates wildlife movement along the constrained linkage. The project includes design features that will maintain some wildlife movement functions along the eastern boundary and minimize the impact on CSS and gnatcatcher. The project would further enhance riparian corridor habitat connectivity and wildlife functions at the Escondido Creek crossing. Last, the project would preserve additional off-site habitat in the subregional NCCP area that will be occupied by gnatcatcher and much larger in size and of equivalent or superior quality, function, and value compared to that being impacted by the project. Therefore, the project will not preclude or prevent the preparation of the subregional NCCP.

Finding 1.d: The habitat loss has been minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable in accordance with Section 4.3 of the NCCP Process Guidelines.

The Project would impact 10.4 acres of CSS habitat, out of 10.9 existing. Section 4.3 of the NCCP Guidelines (CDFW 1993a) states, in part: “Project design must be consistent with the Conservation Guidelines and with any guidelines adopted by the subregion and concurred with by the CDFG and USFWS and must, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize habitat loss.” Impacts are allowable according to the Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub NCCP Conservation Guidelines (CDFW 1993b) when the site’s potential value for conservation is considered.

Based on the NCCP Logic Flow Chart and as depicted on Figure 1, the quality of habitat supported on the project site is defined as being of “Low Value” and “Intermediate Value.”, although the County’s Habitat Evaluation shows the Project site ranked as having no value to the gnatcatcher for nesting (County 2008b). According to the Conservation Guidelines, sites of low and intermediate value can be impacted on a case by case basis with appropriate mitigation.

As described above, impacts on CSS would be minimized through a combination of design features, on-site restoration, and preservation. The impacts would be further mitigated through additional off-site preservation. The project will preserve 2.3 acres of CSS habitat on site, including 1.8 acres of restored habitat, and contribute a minimum of 18.5 acres of additional off-site CSS habitat of superior habitat connectivity and long-term viability, to the satisfaction of PDS and the Wildlife Agencies. Therefore, with consideration of the on- and off-site contributions to the region, the habitat loss has been minimized and mitigated to the maximum extent practicable.

Finding 2 The habitat loss will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of listed species in the wild.

The Project site is used by a variety of wildlife species and, with the exception of wart-stemmed ceanothus, does not support core or critical populations of any special status species. The site supports a single breeding pair of coastal California gnatcatcher and suitable breeding habitat for least Bell’s vireo. The site generally contains large contiguous stands of chaparral, patchy stands of CSS, non-native grassland, and

sections of oak and willow riparian areas. Although a single gnatcatcher breeding pair will be impacted, impacts to 10.4 acres of CSS will not reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species. Of the 10.4 acres of CSS that would be impacted, approximately 4.1 acres are considered Low Value due to the small size, vegetation composition, and fragmented arrangement of the stands (Figure 1). No gnatcatchers were observed or otherwise detected in these Low Value stands and their potential to support nesting gnatcatchers is considered to be low. Impacts to these Low Value stands that are not occupied by gnatcatcher would not reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species. The remaining approximately 6.3 acres of CSS on site are considered Intermediate Value due to their less-fragmented arrangement and proximity to the gnatcatcher breeding pair on site. Although less fragmented than the Low Value stands, the Intermediate Value stands are still broken by an existing paved roadway that traverses the site and other pockets of disturbed areas. The largest, intact stand also occurs immediately adjacent to one of the rural residences to the east of the site. Considering the 6.3-acre size and overall quality of the Intermediate Value CSS, the potential for it to support additional gnatcatcher breeding territories beyond the single territory confirmed is considered low. The CSS on site has a limited carrying capacity and ceiling for breeding gnatcatchers. Impacts to these Intermediate Value stands would also not reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species.

The CSS on site is expected to contribute to dispersal and migration for the species, but it is not the only habitat in the local area expected to provide those functions. Additional scrub and chaparral occur in the local area for gnatcatchers and other wildlife to disperse and migrate through. As described above, off-site CSS in the local area is composed of fragmented stands and islands of CSS. These off-site stands and islands are situated amongst developed land and undeveloped land characterized by chaparral and riparian habitat. Based on survey results and known records for the off-site areas, the fragmented stands and islands of off-site CSS do not support high numbers of gnatcatchers or a significant population relative to other core habitat in the Harmony Grove and Elfin Forest area. There are no large blocks of high value CSS in the local area for which the on-site CSS is vital to provide a connection to. As also described above, movement functions along the eastern edge of the site will be conserved within thinned native vegetation fuel modification zones, thereby conserving some functionality of the habitat and minimizing the impact. Therefore, project impacts to CSS used for dispersal and migration would also not reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species.

The project will conserve on-site CSS and chaparral habitat to facilitate gnatcatcher movement through the local area and preserve a minimum of 18.5 acres of off-site CSS with superior habitat connectivity and long-term viability for the species. Escondido Creek and avoidance buffers will be preserved and enhanced through removing barriers to movement and restoring habitat, providing superior habitat for least Bell's vireo and other riparian species. The wetland impacts would be mitigated within the same watershed as feasible through required agency permits. Habitat impacts would be mitigated off-site in the North County MSCP subarea. Mitigation for impacts to CSS, including both the 4.1 acres of Low Value and 6.3 acres of Intermediate Value CSS, is being provided at a 2:1 ratio in accordance with Mitigation Measure Bio-1B. Off-site CSS mitigation to be provided will be occupied

by gnatcatcher, of Intermediate or High Value, and/or other like-functioning habitat as approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. Off-site preservation of mitigation land would include the recordation of a biological open space easement and preparation of an RMP to address long-term monitoring, maintenance, management, and reporting directives, in perpetuity, approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. To the extent the land is available for preservation, the off-site mitigation would occur within land designated as PAMA in the Draft MSCP North County Plan and located in the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove Planning Area or elsewhere in the northern coastal foothills ecoregion. The ultimate location must be approved by the County and Wildlife Agencies. Long-term management of the preserved land would be funded through a non-wasting endowment in an amount determined through preparation of a Property Assessment Record (PAR) or similar method for determining funding amount. The open space easement would be owned by a conservancy, the County or other similar, experienced entity subject to approval by the County. Should a regional entity to manage biological open space be formed, the natural habitat areas within the project site could be dedicated to that entity and managed as part of an overall preserve system for northern San Diego County. If demonstrated to the satisfaction of the County and Wildlife Agencies that off-site preservation of mitigation land is not feasible to fulfill all or a portion of mitigation obligations, then the Project would include purchase of occupied CSS credits at an approved conservation bank, such as the Red Mountain Conservation Bank, Buena Creek Conservation Bank, or other bank deemed acceptable by the County and Wildlife Agencies. Therefore, the habitat loss will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of listed species in the wild.

Finding 3: The habitat loss is incidental to otherwise lawful activities.

The project will require grading plans and improvement plans from the County, as well as 404, 401, and 1600 permits for impacts to USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW jurisdictional areas. The issuance of a Habitat Loss Permit by the County of San Diego, with the concurrence of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and approval by the County of San Diego of a Grading Permit, Clearing Permit, or Improvement Plan is required prior to the clearing of any CSS supported on the project site. No state or federal permits other than those mentioned above are identified as being required at this time. Construction and/or land use modification will not commence until all appropriate permits have been issued. The project has been found to be in conformance with Section 86.104 of the San Diego County Code. As such, the anticipated loss will be incidental to "otherwise lawful activities".

NCCP FLOWCHART

1. Is natural vegetation present? **Yes.**
2. Is Coastal sage scrub present? **Yes.**
3. Is Coastal sage scrub the most dense in the subregion? **No.** The CSS on the site is in relatively small patches surrounded by other habitat types. There is a large area of

very high value gnatcatcher habitat about two miles to the southwest of the site (County 2008b).

4. Is the land close to high value district. **Yes.** Although it is small, there is an area of high value gnatcatcher habitat about half a mile northeast of the site (County 2008b). There is no direct connection to this habitat from the project site. The site is separated from this area by single family residential uses, although a constrained and fragmented connection of habitat exists.
5. Is the land located in a corridor between higher value districts. **Yes.** While the project site itself does not function as a corridor, the eastern edge of the site likely contributes to north-south wildlife movement that occurs along the West Ridge, which would connect known gnatcatcher records north of Escondido Creek to those from Del Dios Highlands Preserve and further to the south, southeast, and southwest.
6. Does the land support high density of target species? **No.** Although it does not support a high density of any one species, the site supports one breeding pair of coastal California gnatcatchers. Other sensitive species identified on the site are: ashy spike-moss (*Selaginella cinerascens*), San Diego sagewort (*Artemisia palmeri*), southwestern spiny rush (*Juncus acutus* var. *leopoldii*), summer holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *diversifolia*), wart-stemmed ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*), American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), coastal California gnatcatcher, great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), green heron (*Butorides virescens*), least Bell's vireo, northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*), and yellow warbler (*Setophaga petechia*). The site supports a large population of wart-stemmed ceanothus (23,113 plants); however, 21,150 individuals (92%) would be conserved within the on-site open space.

Based on the NCCP Logic Flow Chart, the quality of habitat supported on the project site is defined as being of "Low Value" and "Intermediate Value.", although the County's Habitat Evaluation shows the Project site ranked as having no value to the species for nesting (County 2008b). According to the Conservation Guidelines, sites of low and intermediate value can be impacted on a case by case basis with appropriate mitigation.

Of the 10.4 acres of CSS that will be impacted, approximately 4.1 acres (39 percent) is made of up smaller, fragmented patches in the southern and western portions of the Project impact area where gnatcatchers were not detected during surveys, but could be used for foraging, migration and dispersal. These 4.1 acres would be considered to have low value using the criteria for the NCCP Logic Flow Chart because of their fragmented nature and small patch size, and their low function and value for sensitive species. The remaining 6.3 acres of CSS in the eastern portion of the site would be considered to have intermediate value, given the habitat was confirmed to be used for breeding by gnatcatcher and is characterized by large, intact stands. As mentioned above, according to the Conservation Guidelines, the habitat can be impacted on a case by case basis with appropriate mitigation.

Impacts to on-site CSS will be minimized through a combination of design features, on-site restoration, and preservation. The impacts would be further mitigated through additional off-site preservation. As stated above, some of the impacted habitat would occur within thinned native vegetation fuel modification zones, thereby conserving some functionality of the habitat and minimizing the impact. The Project would further utilize native scrub species in the landscape palette to the extent allowed to meet fire and landscape requirements, thereby replacing some additional functionality on site and minimizing the impact. Additional areas within the Project temporary impact footprint would be restored to CSS and placed within biological open space, thereby replacing some of the habitat loss and minimizing the overall impact to the habitat on site. Last, the Project would preserve additional off-site habitat that will be occupied by gnatcatcher and much larger in size and of equivalent or superior quality, function, and value compared to that being impacted by the Project.

The loss of 10.4 acres of CSS on site would be mitigated in accordance with Section 4.3 of the NCCP Guidelines and offset by preserving additional habitat in the region. As a regulatory requirement, the Project will obtain an HLP from the County, which requires concurrence from the USFWS and CDFW prior to issuance. The HLP will incorporate the avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation measures addressed herein and will include detailed information about the specific type(s) and location(s) for the mitigation. Compensatory mitigation measures are proposed herein to offset the loss of the CSS habitat. Approximately 1.8 acres would be restored or created within temporary impact areas along the southern boundary. These 1.8 acres will be preserved, along with an additional 0.5 acre, for a total of 2.3 acres of preserved CSS within biological open space for the Project (Figure 1). In addition to the on-site restoration, creation, and preservation of 2.3 acres, the Project proposes one or a combination of the following for an additional 18.5 acres of CSS in the region: (1) purchase, acquisition, biological open space easement, RMP implementation, and long-term management of land containing occupied CSS as approved by the County, USFWS, and CDFW; and/or (2) purchase of occupied CSS credits from a conservation bank as approved by the County, USFWS, and CDFW. To the extent possible, mitigation will occur within High Value or Intermediate Value lands using the NCCP Conservation Guidelines located in PAMA and in the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove Planning Area, northern coastal foothills ecoregion, or other location deemed acceptable by the County, USFWS, and CDFW.

MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM:

The following shall be the Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program for this Habitat Loss Permit:

Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 requires the County to adopt a mitigation reporting or monitoring program for any project that is approved on the basis of a mitigated Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report for which findings are required under Section 21081(a)(1). The program must be adopted for the changes to a project which the County has adopted, or made a condition of project approval, in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The program must be designed to ensure compliance during project implementation.

The mitigation monitoring program is comprised of all the environmental mitigation measures adopted for the project. The full requirements of the program (such as what is being monitored, method and frequency, who is responsible, and required time frames) are found within the individual project conditions. These conditions are referenced below by category under the mechanism which will be used to ensure compliance during project implementation.

- Subsequent Project Permits

Compliance with the following conditions is assured because specified subsequent permits or approvals required for this project will not be approved until the conditions have been satisfied:

M-BI-1a through M-BI-9

NOTICE: The issuance of this permit by the County of San Diego does not authorize the applicant for said permit to violate any federal, state, or county laws, ordinances, regulations, or policies, including but not limited to, the federal Endangered Species Act and any amendments thereto.

NOTICE: This subject property is known to contain Coastal sage scrub plant community. Such plant community is habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The Federal government recently listed the gnatcatcher as a threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. Section 1531 et seq.). THE LISTING MAY RESULT IN AN APPLICANT'S INABILITY TO PROCEED WITH HIS/HER PROJECT WITHOUT A PERMIT FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IF THE SPECIES OR ITS HABITAT ARE PRESENT ON THE PROJECT SITE. It is advisable to contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to determine the applicability of the prohibitions under the Act to each applicant's property.

NOTICE: The subject property contains wetlands, a lake, a stream, and/or waters of the U.S. which may be subject to regulation by State and/or federal agencies, including, but not limited to, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is the applicant's responsibility to consult with each agency to determine if a permit, agreement or other approval is required and to obtain all necessary permits, agreements or approvals before commencing any activity which could impact the wetlands, lake, stream, and/or waters of the U.S. on the subject property. The agency contact information is provided below.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: 6010 Hidden Valley Rd, Suite 105, Carlsbad, CA 92011-4219; (858) 674-5386; <http://www.usace.army.mil/>

Regional Water Quality Control Board: 9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92123-4340; (858) 467-2952; <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife: 3883 Ruffin Rd., San Diego, CA 92123; (858) 467-4201; <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>

Notice : The subject property contains habitat which may be used for nesting by migratory birds. Any grading, brushing or clearing conducted during the migratory bird breeding season, February 1 – August 31, has a potential to impact nesting or breeding birds in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The applicant may submit evidence that nesting or breeding

migratory birds will not be affected by the grading, brushing or clearing to these agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 3883 Ruffin Rd., San Diego, CA 92123, (858) 467-4201, <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>; and United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 6010 Hidden Valley Rd, Carlsbad, CA 92011-4219, (760) 431-9440, <http://www.fws.gov/>.

NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANT: Because your project has an effect on native biological resources, State law requires the payment of a \$3,078.25 fee to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for their review of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (Fish and Wildlife Code §711.4) and a \$50 administrative fee to the County (\$3,128.25 total). If you made this payment at the time of public review of the environmental document pursuant to Administrative Code Section 362, Article XX, effective August 27, 1992, you have met this obligation. If the fee has not been paid, to comply with State law, the applicant should remit to the County Planning & Development Services, within two (2) working days of the effective date of this approval (the “effective date” being the end of the appeal period, if applicable). **The payment must be by certified check or cashier’s check payable to the “County of San Diego” and can be submitted to the cashier at the PDS office or directly to the County Clerk.** The fees (excluding the administrative fee) may be waived for projects that are found by the Planning & Development Services and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to have a no effect impact on fish and wildlife resources. Failure to remit the required fee in full within the time specified above will result in County notification to the State that a fee was required but not paid, and could result in State imposed penalties and recovery under the provisions of the Revenue and Taxation Code. In addition, Section 21089(b) of the Public Resources Code, and Section 711.4(c) of the Fish and Wildlife Code, provide that no project shall be operative, vested, or final until the required filing fee is paid.

DEFENSE OF LAWSUITS AND INDEMNITY: The applicant shall: (1) defend, indemnify and hold harmless the County, its agents, officers and employees from any claim, action or proceeding against the County, its agents, officers and employees to attack, set aside, void or annul this approval or any of the proceedings, acts or determinations taken, done or made prior to this approval; and (2) reimburse the County, its agents, officers or employees for any court costs and attorney’s fees which the County, its agents, officers or employees may be required by a court to pay as a result of such approval. At its sole discretion, the County may participate at its own expense in the defense of any such action, but such participation shall not relieve the applicant of any obligation imposed by this condition. The County shall notify the applicant promptly of any claim or action and cooperate fully in the defense.

JUDICIAL REVIEW TIME LIMITATIONS: The time within which judicial review of this decision must be sought is governed by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6, which has been made applicable in the County of San Diego by San Diego County Code Section 11.120. Any petition or other paper seeking judicial review must be filed in the appropriate court not later than the 90th day following the date on which this decision becomes final; however, if within 10 days after the decision becomes final a request for the record of the proceedings is filed and the required deposit in an amount sufficient to cover the estimated cost of preparation of such record is timely deposited, the time within which such petition may be filed in court is extended to not later than the 30th day following the date on which the record is either personally delivered or mailed to the party, or the party’s attorney of record. A written request for the preparation of the record of the proceedings shall be filed with the Director, Planning & Development Services, 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 110, San Diego, California 92123.

April 20, 2017

HLP _____

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The foregoing decision was approved by the Director of Planning & Development Services on date of decision. A copy of this decision, and the documentation supporting the decision, is on file in the Planning & Development Services office at 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 110, San Diego, California.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
MARK WARDLAW, DIRECTOR

BY:

LISA GORDON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Project Planning Division

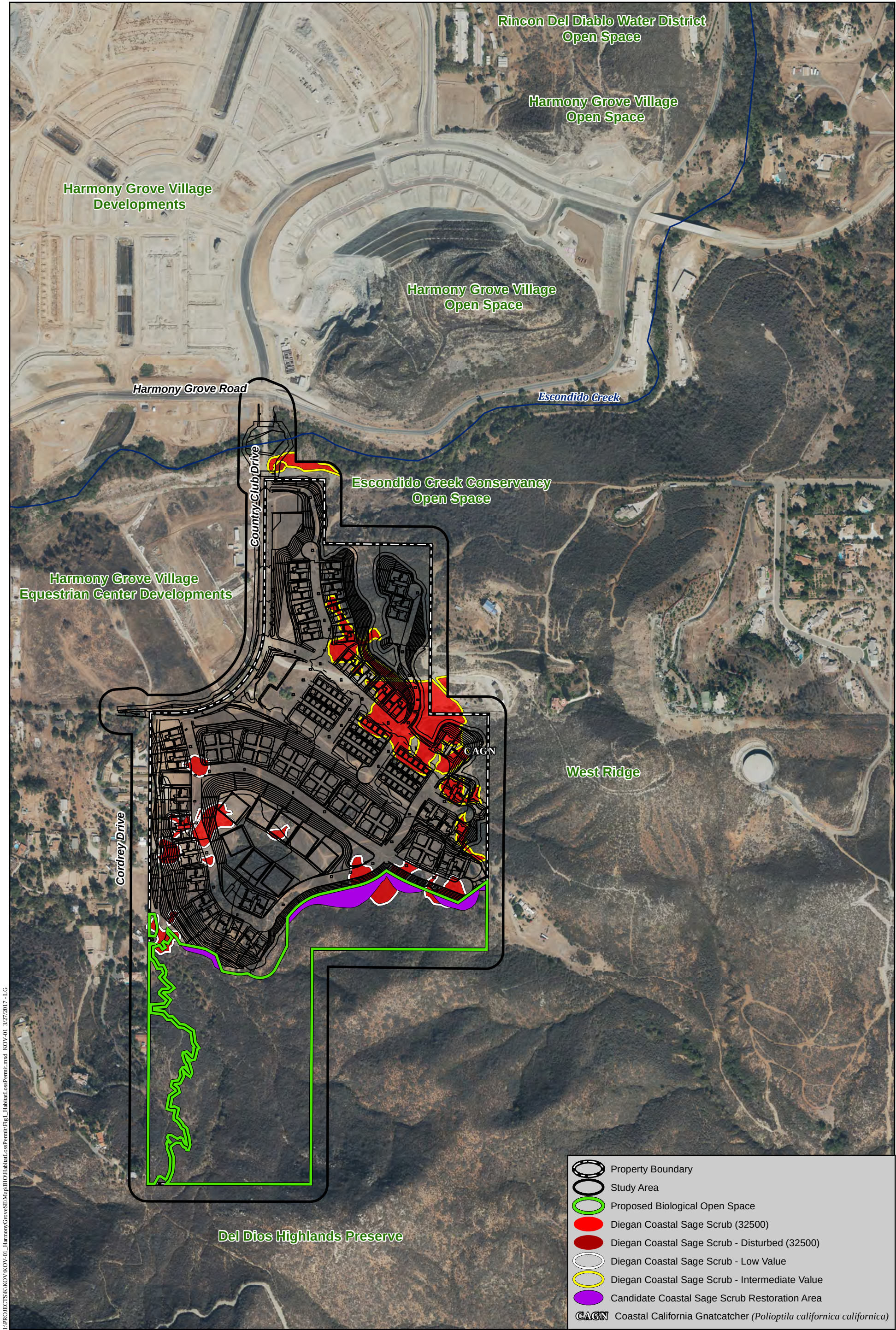
Attachments

Figure 1: Habitat Loss Permit Exhibit

cc: To be provided at issuance of Habitat Loss Permit

email cc:

Ashley Smith, Project Manager, Project Planning, Planning & Development Services
Mark Slovick, Planning Manager, Project Planning, Planning & Development Services
San Dieguito Community Planning Group



Habitat Loss Permit

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 1