

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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January 23, 2006

Dan Klemann, Case Planner
County of Ventura
Planning Division
Resource Management Agency
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

**Comments on Proposed Single Family Dwelling and Associated Structures,
Headwaters of Deer Creek Canyon**

Dear Mr. Klemann:

Pursuant to the Local Coastal Program, the County of Ventura Planning Division contacted our agency regarding the above-mentioned project. The project consists of construction of an approximately 7,483 square foot single family dwelling (s.f.), 4,423 s.f. barn, 1,352 s.f. studio/guest house, approximately 2,500 cubic yards of grading, roads, retaining walls, swimming pool, septic system, and utilities. The Notice of Proposed Project does not specify the length of the access road to be built. The approximately 20.5-acre project site is located on Pacific View Road (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 700-0-010-585 and 615), at the headwaters of Deer Canyon, west of Clarks Peak. (Our staff had not yet received the site plan at the time of writing this letter.)

The subject site is located adjacent to (east of), and upstream of, a major National Park Service (NPS) holding. Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a joint powers authority of which the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) is a part, owns a smaller portion of land contiguous with this NPS parkland. The southern parcel of the proposed development is identified as Proposed National Park Service Acquisition Easement Area in its Land Protection Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). Portions of the northern parcel possess the same resource values as the southern parcel and contribute equally to the watershed values as does the southern parcel. The site supports sensitive plant and wildlife species. The Conservancy is concerned with the proposed removal of approximately 4.293 acres of vegetation and associated impacts to the sensitive Deer Creek aquatic ecosystem, for the construction of one home and associated structures.

We believe this project warrants additional project modifications and analysis of project environmental impacts. Please provide our agency any California Environmental Quality

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Act documents, when they become available, for this project. We encourage the applicant and County to explore project modifications (such as clustering and utilizing already disturbed areas) to reduce this level of impact to native vegetation in this sensitive watershed. Impacts to sensitive plant species should also be avoided. The applicant should address whether the project will be visible from nearby parkland.

Once maximum avoidance of impacts to biological and visual resources has been achieved, we recommend that the County require a conservation easement be granted to a public park agency, such as MRCA, over the ungraded open space on the project site. This is warranted due to the sensitive location nearby parkland and in a sensitive Deer Creek watershed, the presence of sensitive species onsite, and to assure the public that no future disturbance would occur over the remainder of the project site. Without conservation easements, we have seen time and time again additional disturbances at a later date degrade the biological resources onsite that were not contemplated in the original environmental documents. This easement should be required to be recorded prior to vegetation removal, grading, or construction. It is not unusual in this area to require approximately 50 percent of the project site to remain as totally protected open space. This conservation easement should prohibit development, grazing, agriculture, animal enclosures, fencing, vegetation removal, non-native plantings, lights, and materials storage.

In summary, the Conservancy recommends that impacts to visual resources be analyzed, that the project be modified to reduce impacts to biological resources and to avoid impacts to visual resources, and that a conservation easement be required over the ungraded open space. Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss further, please contact Judi Tamasi of our staff at (310)-589-3200, ext. 121.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH CHEADLE
Chairperson

City of Malibu
Two residences, 22303 and 2230 PCH
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cc: NPS-SMMNRA