

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

TREISAND CENTER FOR CONSERVANCY STUDIES
50 RAMIREZ CANYON ROAD
MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265
PHONE (310) 589-3200
FAX (310) 589-3207

SMMC
ATTACHMENT
10/20/08
ITEM 9



September 23, 1999

Mr. Drew D. Purvis
Associate Planner
City of Malibu Planning Department
23555 Civic Center Way
Malibu, California 90265

Agency Comments
Tentative Tract Map No. 52487
24200 Pacific Coast Highway

Dear Mr. Purvis:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy offers the following comments on the proposed subdivision of 24.28 acres on the Malibu Bluffs into eight lots. The proposed project is not compatible with the existing topographic, ecological, and viewshed constraints of property. Unless the project is substantially reduced as recommended in this letter, a focused Environmental Impact Report must be required for the reasons addressed in this letter.

The subject property contains rare coastal bluff vegetation that is rare in the Santa Monica Mountains. In this case, the vegetated area is highly accessible for public enjoyment and it is integral to the ecological viability of a unique component of the State Park system. Development of the subject property also has the potential to substantially degrade the visual resource value of the State Park property, particularly when the Little League fields are removed in the near future. The property also contains a critical portion of the habitat linkage with the greatest long-term viability between State Park's Malibu Bluffs open space and the nearest large block of habitat located just northeast of the Malibu Canyon Road entrance of Pepperdine University.)

Wildlife Corridor Importance

The Conservancy's Environmental Impact Report comment letters on the proposed hotel across Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) addressed this habitat linkage, and its alternative closer to Puerco Canyon. If a contiguous band of unaltered (including no fuel modification) native habitat is not provided from just east of Pepperdine University's Malibu Canyon Road entrance, across PCH and around the eastern and southern boundaries of the subject property, all available science points to a catastrophic loss of wildlife species in the Malibu Bluffs State Park property.

Early morning (1:30 to 4:30 a.m.) traffic volumes on PCH and Malibu Canyon Road permit successful wildlife crossing of these roadways by mammals, human sensitive bird species, and

possibly even reptiles. When future road construction occurs on either concerned section of these two roadways, small pipe culverts should be installed for reptiles and small mammals. The only portions of this wildlife corridor between Pepperdine open space and the State Park property that are in dire need of vegetation restoration are the bare area at the southwest corner of Webb Way and Malibu Canyon Road and the ice plant-covered slope on the south side of PCH, much of which is contained in lots 6 and 7 of the proposed project.

For the subject 24-acre property to provide an adequate contribution to this wildlife corridor, any approved project must provide the following elements protected under a conservation easement in favor of both a public park agency and the City of Malibu.

1. A *minimum* 150-foot-wide and 500-foot-long contiguous band of habitat along the northern property boundary. The most exterior (closest to PCH) 100 feet of the 150 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. The remaining 50 plus feet of width must only contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within this conservation easement area.
2. A *minimum* 200-foot-wide contiguous band of habitat along the eastern property boundary. The most easterly 100 feet of the 200 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. The remaining 100 plus feet of width must only contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within this conservation easement area.
3. A *minimum* 300-foot-wide contiguous band of habitat along the southern property boundary. The most southerly 200 feet of the 300 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. If fuel modification is necessary from existing structures to the south, the zone of unmodified area can be shifted accordingly northward. The remaining 100 plus feet of width must only contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within this conservation easement area.

Incompatibility with Terrain

The property includes two primary, south-facing draws that contain primarily native vegetation. Those two draws provide critical habitat, are integral to the above described wildlife corridor, and represent an important remnant of coastal bluff topography in Los Angeles County. The project design should work with the existing topographic constraints and preserve, not fill, these draws.

Need for Ecological Analysis

Any further project processing must be preceded by an ecological constraints analysis. This analysis should include a thorough study of the onsite coastal bluff vegetation and the potential for vegetation restoration on portions of the site. This analysis should also examine how the

onsite coastal bluff vegetation contributes to, and is integral to, the habitat system on the adjoining State Park property. Likewise the analysis should examine how the onsite habitat contributes to the ecological viability of the habitat system on the adjoining State Park property.

Recommended Alternative Project Design

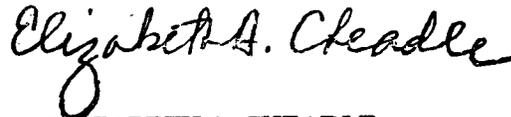
In addition to all of the above referenced critical design changes, we recommend that the applicant return with a design that also includes the following two modifications:

1. Provide a scenic easement over the western half of lot 8.
2. Eliminate all development in area occupied by lots 1 and 3.

A project which incorporates all of the recommendations in this letter would probably qualify for a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Please address any questions and correspondence to Paul Edelman of our staff at (310) 589-3200 extention 128.

Sincerely,



ELIZABETH A. CHEADLE
Chairperson

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

RAMIREZ CANYON PARK
5750 RAMIREZ CANYON ROAD
MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265
PHONE (310) 589-3200
FAX (310) 589-3207



September 6, 2001

Ms. Meredith T. Elguira
Associate Planner
Planning Department
City of Malibu
23555 Civic Center Way
Malibu, California 90265-4804

**Tentative Tract Map No. 52487 NOP Comments,
24200 Pacific Coast Highway on Malibu Bluffs.**

Dear Ms. Elguira:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy offers the following comments on the proposed subdivision of 24.28 acres on the Malibu Bluffs into eight separate single-family residential lots and sports fields. The proposed project is not compatible with the existing topographic, ecological, and viewshed constraints of the property. (Please note that Conservancy previously commented in a September 23, 1999, letter on a similar project in the same location.)

The Malibu Bluffs in this area contain a unique assemblage of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and coastal bluff vegetation elements that is rare in the Santa Monica Mountains. The vegetated area on the bluffs is highly accessible for public enjoyment (e.g., via trails and the other aesthetic benefits) and it is integral to the ecological viability of a unique component of the State Park system. Development of the subject property also has the potential to substantially degrade the visual resource value of the State Park property. The property also contains a critical portion of the habitat linkage with the greatest long-term viability between State Park's Malibu Bluffs open space and the nearest large block of habitat located just northeast of the Malibu Canyon Road entrance of Pepperdine University.

Wildlife Corridor Importance and Need for Project Modifications

The Conservancy's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) comment letters on the proposed hotel across Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) addressed this habitat linkage to Pepperdine-owned open space, and its alternative closer to Puerco Canyon. If a contiguous band of unaltered (including no fuel modification) native habitat is not provided from just east of Pepperdine University's Malibu Canyon Road entrance, across PCH and around the

eastern and southern boundaries of the subject property, all available science points to a catastrophic loss of wildlife species in the Malibu Bluffs State Park property.

Early morning (1:30 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.) traffic volumes on PCH and Malibu Canyon Road permit successful wildlife crossing of these roadways by mammals, bird species sensitive to human presence, and possibly even reptiles. If future road construction occurs on either concerned section of these two roadways, small pipe culverts (10-16 inch) should be installed for reptiles and small mammals. The only portions of this wildlife corridor between Pepperdine-owned open space and the State Park property that are in dire need of vegetation restoration are the bare area at the southwest corner of Webb Way and Malibu Canyon Road and the slope on the south side of PCH, much of which is contained in lots 5, 7, and 8 of the proposed project.

Although the NOP states that the home sites would be clustered, they in fact appear to be spread out across the site. For the subject 24-acre property to provide an adequate contribution to this wildlife corridor, any approved project must provide the following elements protected under a conservation easement in favor of both a public park agency and the City of Malibu.

1. A minimum 150-foot-wide and 500-foot-long contiguous band of habitat along the northern property boundary. The most exterior (closest to PCH) 100 feet of the 150 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. The remaining 50 plus feet of width must only contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within the conservation easement area.
2. A minimum 200-foot wide contiguous band of habitat along the eastern property boundary. The most easterly 100 feet of the 200 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. The remaining 100 plus feet of width must only contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within the conservation easement area.
3. A minimum 300-foot wide contiguous band of habitat along the southern property boundary. The most southerly 200 feet of the 300 feet of corridor width must remain entirely free of fuel modification requirements. If fuel modification is necessary from existing structures to the south, the zone of unmodified area can be shifted accordingly northward. The remaining 100 plus feet of width must only

contain native plants but with limited fuel modification permitted. No fencing or any manmade structures can be permitted within the conservation easement area.

Incompatibility with Terrain

The property includes two primary, south-facing draws that contain primarily native vegetation. Those two draws provide important habitat, are integral to the described wildlife corridor, and represent an important remnant of coastal bluff topography in Los Angeles County. The project design should work with the existing topographic constraints and preserve, not fill, these draws.

Need for Ecological Analysis

Any further project processing must be preceded by an ecological constraints analysis. This analysis should include a thorough study of the onsite coastal bluff vegetation and the potential for vegetation restoration on portions of the site. The analysis should also examine how the onsite coastal bluff vegetation contributes to, and is integral to, the habitat system on the adjoining State Park property. Likewise the analysis should examine how the onsite habitat contributes to the ecological viability of the habitat system on the adjoining State Park property.

Also, it appears that some of the subject property may have been cleared of vegetation. The DEIR should clarify if the vegetation onsite was cleared for the proposed development, and if so, those impacts should be analyzed in the DEIR.

Recommended Alternative Project Design

In addition to all of the above-referenced critical design changes, we recommend that the DEIR include a design that also includes the following two modifications:

1. Provide a conservation easement (that is dedicated to the City and another public park agency) over the western half of lot 9. The native vegetation should be preserved in this area. This would preserve some of the natural views from the intersection of Malibu Canyon Road and the PCH. In addition to preserving this western half of lot 9, a berm placed at the eastern edge of this western half of lot 9 may also screen views from this intersection. If a berm is installed, native vegetation should be planted.

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2. Eliminate all development in the area which contains the major draws, approximately located in Lots B, 1, and 2.

Cumulative Impacts

The DEIR should include a thorough discussion of past, present, and probable future developments in the area and the cumulative impacts on biological resources. In particular, the DEIR should address the status of the hotel that may be constructed in the open space which is bound by Pacific Coast Highway, Civic Center Way, and Malibu Canyon Road, as well as the four-unit project proposed immediately west of Pepperdine along PCH (on north side of PCH). The DEIR must address how the combined construction of the hotel, the four-unit project, and the subject project would affect wildlife movement between the Malibu Bluffs and the Pepperdine-owned open space and the larger Santa Monica Mountains. Please direct any questions and all future correspondence to me at the above address and by phone at 310-589-3200, ext. 128.

Sincerely,



PAUL EDELMAN

Chief of Natural Resources and Planning

cc: California Department of Parks and Recreation