

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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December 5, 2011

Mr. Paul McCarthy
Department of Regional Planning, Impact Analysis Section
County of Los Angeles
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Notice of Consultation Comments
Project NO. R2008-00284/RPPT200800190/RENV200900122,
1809 Tuna Canyon Road, Topanga Canyon

Dear Mr. McCarthy:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) offers the following comments and recommendations on the Notice of Consultation and draft Initial Study for the above-referenced proposed project. The subject property is bordered on the south by Dix Canyon Creek a blueline stream, and is bordered on the north by public open space owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). This Rocky Ledge public open space was acquired by the MRCA in January of 2011 with County funding, Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation funds and donations from the local community. The Conservancy urges the County to require to applicant to demonstrate that the project and its 200 feet of fuel modification fit within the ecological constraints of the property and that it will not have a deleterious impact on public parkland.

The property is located within the Malibu Coastal Zone and is zoned for Light Agricultural uses. The current California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis is deficient not only for failing to mention a single specific mitigation measure for impacts that would result from this project, but it is also deficient for not addressing the site's proximity to public open space.

A development of the size and scale proposed would have considerable biological and aesthetic impacts for a single-family home in an ecologically and visually sensitive area. The combined footprint of the proposed residence, driveway, and associated structures

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(such as a recreation room) would exceed 16,000 square-feet, making this project one of the largest residences in an area with unique sandstone formations. The Cultural Resources section of the Initial Study acknowledges only that the project site contains rock outcroppings. It is deficient for not providing a single detail that supports the determination that the project would result in less than significant impacts in this regard. Likewise, no mitigation measures are given for the impacts to biota or aesthetics mentioned under Mandatory Findings of Significance.

The widespread presence of State-listed Santa Susana Tarweed (*Deinandra minthornii*) was noted on the afore-mentioned public open space by MRCA staff in December of 2010. Has the proposed project site been surveyed for the presence of Santa Susana Tarweed?

After adequate ecological review and other corresponding mitigation measures have been developed in the CEQA process, the Conservancy recommends that the County include both as a CEQA mitigation measure and a condition of approval, a requirement for a permanent deed restriction over all portions of the property located outside of the approved development footprint. This deed restriction area would include all area located five feet beyond the disturbance footprint shown in any approved plot plan. The permanent deed restriction should not allow any activities other than fuel modification specified in writing by the Los Angeles County Fire Department and expressly prohibit any non-native vegetation. Cultivation of plants native to the Santa Monica Mountains should also be allowed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Paul Edelman of our staff at 310-589-3200 ext. 128, or by e-mail at edelman@smmc.ca.gov. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

ANTONIO GONZALEZ
Chairperson