

SECTION 1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

Lyons Canyon Ranch is an undeveloped, approximately 235.50-acre property located just west of the Golden State Freeway (I-5) and The Old Road, which serves as a frontage road paralleling the freeway north of Calgrove Boulevard. The Golden State Freeway provides regional access from the site via on- and off-ramps at Calgrove Boulevard. The project site is located in Los Angeles County, within Lyon Canyon, immediately adjacent to the current limits of incorporation of the City of Santa Clarita (in the general area of the Pico Canyon/Newhall community). Lyons Canyon Ranch is within the Oat Mountain, California Quadrangle (Refer to the Oversized Maps at the end of this report for the Color USGS Oat Mountain Quad Sheet.) The Stevenson Ranch development in the unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County is immediately to the north while Towsley Canyon is immediately to the south. Figure 1, General Location Map of the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Site, and Figure 2, Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Site on Aerial Photograph Base, show the general location of the project within Los Angeles County and a general aerial view (date of aerial is 23 March 2003) of the project site boundaries, respectively.

A portion of the Lyons Canyon Ranch property is located within two Los Angeles County Significant Environmental Areas (SEAs) (20 and 63), which have been established to protect biological resources within the County. Development within or adjacent to an SEA requires specific procedures and reporting before considering any development. The Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory Committee (SEATAC), established by the County Planning Director, reviews all projects within or adjacent to SEAs for consistency with County resource protection policies.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Lyons Canyon Ranch project grading limits contain approximately 104.90 acres of the 235-acre property. The project includes the development of 112 lots composed of 96 detached single-family lots, 1 condominium lot proposed for development with 90 senior condominium units, 4 open space lots, 5 debris/detention basin lots, 129.5 acres of parks and undeveloped natural areas, and one 1.26-acre fire station lot. The single-family detached units, and attached senior condominium uses are characterized by a lot orientation with a gross target density of 0.82 single-family dwelling units per acre. The project site will be mass-graded in one phase, with a total grading volume of 3.8 million cubic yards, which will be balanced on-site. Grading of the project site is anticipated to take approximately 24 months to complete. Table 1, Lyons Canyon Ranch Land Use Summary, provides a summary breakdown of the proposed uses in terms of acreage, the number and type of dwelling units, and parks/open space area associated with implementation of Lyons Canyon Ranch. (Refer to the Oversized Maps at the end of this report for the Lyons Canyon Ranch Site Plans.)

Figure 1. General Location Map of the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Site



Figure 2. Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Site on Aerial Photograph Base

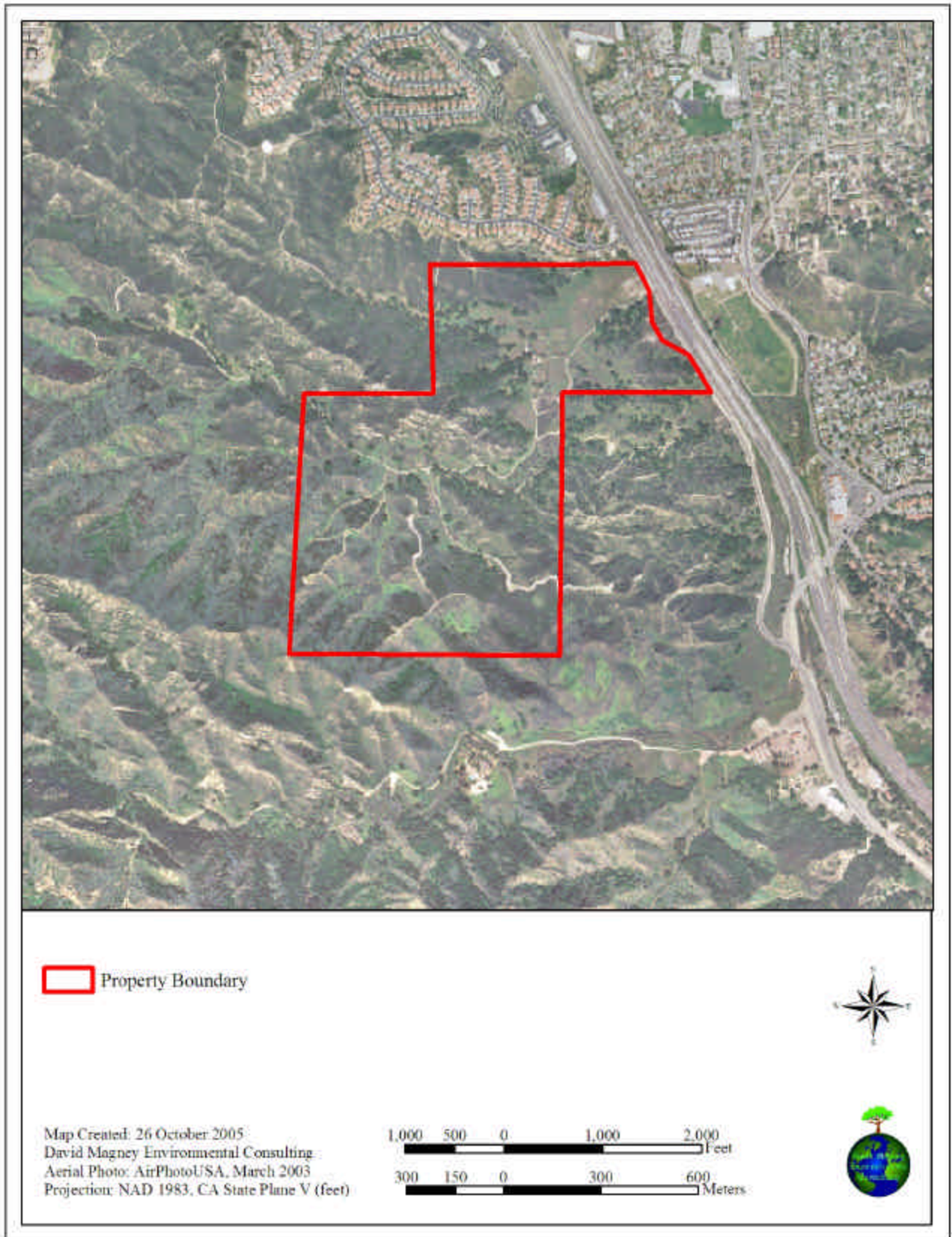




Table 1. Lyons Canyon Ranch Land Use Summary

Development Phase	Land Use	Gross Acres	Number of Lots	Dwelling Units
<i>Residential</i>				
1	Single-Family Residential	46.9	93	93
2	Senior Condominiums	9.26	1	93
Total Residential:		56.16	94	186
<i>Parks and Open Space</i>				
1	Open Space Lot	6.13	1	-
1	Open Space Lot	33.97	1	-
1	Open Space Lot	10.22	1	-
1	Open Space Lot	39.66	1	-
1	Open Space Lot	38.89	1	-
Total Open Space Lots:		128.87	5	-
Total Park Lots:		1.39	1	-
<i>Basin Lots</i>				
1	Basin Lot	12.03	1	-
1	Basin Lot	5.86	1	-
1	Basin Lot	1.95	1	-
1	Basin Lot	1.50	1	-
1	Basin Lot	3.64	1	-
1	Basin Lot	1.53	1	-
Total Basins:		26.51	6	-
<i>Fire Station</i>		2.05	1	-
Subtotal:		214.98	107	186
<i>Other Disturbed Open Space Areas</i>		9.78	-	-
<i>Streets</i>		10.04	-	-
Grand Total:		234.8	107	186

PERMITS REQUIRED

The project applicant is requesting approval of the following entitlement applications, which govern the development activities on the project site as described above:

- **Tentative Tract Map.** Approval of Tentative Tract Map is required to subdivide site into 112 lots.
- **Conditional Use Permit.** A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is required for development within hillside management areas and the County's designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs). The Conditional Use Permit also includes the density bonus request pursuant to County Code Section 22.56.202. Under the County's Zoning Code, a project can request a density bonus of up to 50% provided that at least 50% of the dwelling units requested as part of the density bonus for the development are provided for income-qualifying residents or senior citizens. The Lyons Canyon Ranch project is requesting a 46% density bonus (60 units) and proposes to designate 90 units of the total density as senior housing.
- **Oak Tree Permit.** An Oak Tree Permit is required for the project pursuant to County Code Sections 22.56.2020, 22.56.2070, and 22.56.2180. A total of 1,863 oak trees are located on or within 50 feet of the subject site. The proposed project would require the removal of 179 oak trees and encroachment into the dripline of 75 oak trees.
- **Wetlands Permit:** Wetlands are important habitats that require permits from at least three agencies before they can be modified, depending on the regulations of the regulatory agency, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. Lyon Canyon Creek contains Palustrine wetland habitats onsite, which constrains development in the central portion of the project site.
- **Streambed Alteration Permit:** A Streambed Alteration Agreement will need to be obtained from CDFG to modify existing wetland riparian habitats under CDFG jurisdiction.



SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The Lyons Canyon Ranch project grading limits contain approximately 104.90 acres of the 235-acre property. Of the 104.90 acres to be graded, approximately 99.73 acres of natural vegetation would be lost as a result of the project. The biological resources onsite may be directly and/or indirectly impacted by several general factors or mechanisms due to development of Lyons Canyon Ranch. Impact factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- Soil integrity degradation (i.e. increased erosion, soil compaction, sedimentation, and turbidity);
- Noise and air pollution;
- Vegetation damage, including sensitive/rare habitats;
- Loss of portions of an SEA onsite;
- Cumulative loss of natural open areas;
- A temporary decrease in or alteration of habitat (quality) for plants and wildlife that might otherwise become established or frequent the area's habitats; and
- The potential for temporary or permanent damage or loss to wildlife and plant species, including special-status species.

More specifically, Table 2, Summary of the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Significant Impacts, provides a list of all identified direct and indirect potentially significant, significant, and cumulatively significant impacts that would result from the implementation of the Lyons Canyon Ranch development. (See also Appendix A, Initial Study Questionnaire.)

Table 23, Cumulative Projects List (City of Santa Clarita) (page 135), and Table 24, Cumulative Projects List (Unincorporated Area of Los Angeles County) (page 136), in the Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources and SEA Integrity section below, identify related projects and other possible developments in the area that are determined as having the potential to interact with the proposed project to the extent that a significant cumulative effect may occur. The resulting related projects include primarily only those determined to be at least indirectly capable of interacting with the proposed project.

Table 2. Summary of the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project Significant Impacts

Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation
IMPACTS TO TREES AND SENSITIVE WOODLAND HABITAT	
Loss of Southern California Black Walnut Woodland	Significant
Loss of Oak Trees, Coast Live Oak Woodland, and Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland	Significant
IMPACTS TO BIOLOGICAL LIFE HISTORY	
<i>Direct Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species</i>	
Loss of Special-status <i>Calochortus</i> Species Known Onsite	Significant
Loss of <i>Calystegia peirsonii</i> (Peirson's Morning-glory) Plants Onsite	Significant
Loss of <i>Juglans californica</i> var. <i>californica</i> (Southern California Black Walnut) Plants Known Onsite	Significant

Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation
Loss of <i>Ambrosia confertiflora</i> (Weakleaf Burweed) Plants Known Onsite	Significant
Loss of <i>Ericameria ericoides</i> ssp. <i>ericoides</i> (Mock Heather) Plants Known Onsite	Significant
Loss of <i>Navarretia hamata</i> ssp. <i>hamata</i> (Skunk Navarretia) Plants Onsite	Significant
Loss of Rare Plants Potentially Occurring Onsite	Potentially Significant
<i>Indirect Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species</i>	
Impacts of Increased Dust/Urban Pollutants on Special-Status Plant Species	Potentially Significant.
Impacts of Invasive Exotic Plant Species Introduction into Natural Plant Communities	Potentially Significant
<i>Impacts to General Wildlife Species</i>	
Loss of/Disturbance to Aquatic/Semi-aquatic Wildlife During Construction	Potentially Significant
Loss of and Disturbance to Amphibian Wildlife During Construction	Potentially Significant
Loss of and Disturbance to Reptile Wildlife During Construction	Potentially Significant
Loss of and Disturbance to Breeding and Nesting Birds During Construction	Potentially Significant
Loss of and Disturbance to Mammal Wildlife During Construction	Potentially Significant
<i>Direct Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species</i>	
Loss of Cooper's Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>) and Foraging & Nesting Habitat	Significant
Loss of Oak Titmouse (<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>) Foraging & Nesting Habitat	Significant
Loss of Nuttall's Woodpecker (<i>Picoides nuttallii</i>) Foraging & Nesting Habitat	Significant
Loss of Barn Owl (<i>Tyto alba</i>) Foraging and Nesting Habitat	Significant (for impacted nests only)
Loss of San Diego Desert Woodrat (<i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i>) & Habitat	Significant
Loss of Special-Status Reptiles Potentially Present	Potentially Significant
Loss of Special-Status Bird Species Potentially Present	Potentially Significant
Disturbance to Mountain Lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>) and Loss of Habitat	Potentially Significant
Disturbance to Ring-tailed Cat (<i>Bassariscus astutus</i>) and Loss of Habitat	Potentially Significant
Disturbance to Western Mastiff Bat (<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>) and Loss of Habitat	Potentially Significant
<i>Indirect Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife Species</i>	
Impacts Related to Noise	Potentially Significant
Impacts Related to Human Activity	Potentially Significant
Impacts Related to Night Lighting	Potentially Significant



Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation
IMPACTS TO NATURAL VEGETATION, INCLUDING SENSITIVE HABITATS	
Loss of Grassland Habitat	Significant
Loss of Lichen-Rock Outcrop Habitat	Potentially Significant
Loss of Coastal Sage Scrub	Significant
Loss of Chaparral Habitat	Significant
Loss of Southern California Black Walnut Woodland	Significant
Loss of Coast Live Oak Woodland & Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland	Significant
Loss of Valley Oak Woodland	Significant
Loss of Sensitive Wetland Plant Communities	Significant
Loss of Wildlife Foraging and Cover Habitats	Significant
IMPACTS OF FUEL MODIFICATION	Potentially Significant
IMPACTS FROM LANDSCAPING	Potentially Significant
IMPACTS TO SEA INTEGRITY	Potentially Significant
IMPACTS TO NATURAL OPEN AREA	Significant
IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE MOVEMENT PATHS ONSITE	Less Than Significant
INTERFERENCE WITH WILDLIFE MOVEMENT WITHIN LYON CANYON	Significant
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS	
<i>Cumulative Impacts to Biological Life History</i>	
Cumulative Impacts to Oak Trees, Coast Live Oak Woodland, Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland, and Valley Oak Woodland	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Plant Species Known Onsite	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Rare Plants Potentially Occurring Onsite	Cumulatively Potentially Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Aquatic/Semi-Aquatic Wildlife	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Amphibian Wildlife	Cumulatively Potentially Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Reptile Wildlife	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Breeding and Nesting Birds	Cumulatively Potentially Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Mammal Wildlife	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
Cumulative Impacts to Cooper's Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>) and Foraging and Nesting Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Oak Titmouse (<i>Baeolophus inornatus</i>) and Foraging and Nesting Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Nuttall's Woodpecker (<i>Picoides Nuttallii</i>) and Foraging and Nesting Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Barn Owl (<i>Tyto alba</i>) and Nesting Habitat	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
Cumulative Impacts to San Diego Desert Woodrat	Cumulatively Significant



Impact	Level of Significance Before Mitigation
<i>(Neotoma lepida intermedia)</i> and Habitat	
Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Reptiles Potentially Present	Cumulatively Potentially Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Special-Status Bird Species Potentially Present	Cumulatively Potentially Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Mountain Lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>) and Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Ring-tailed Cat (<i>Bassariscus astutus</i>) and Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Western Mastiff Bat (<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>) and Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
<i>Cumulative Impacts to Natural Vegetation, Including Sensitive Habitats</i>	
Cumulative Impacts to Grassland Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Lichen-Rock Outcrop Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Coastal Sage Scrub Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Chaparral Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Coast Live Oak Woodland and Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland Habitats	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Valley Oak Habitat	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
Cumulative Impacts to Wildlife Foraging and Cover Habitats	Cumulatively Significant and Unavoidable
<i>Cumulative Impacts of Fuel Modification</i>	Cumulatively Significant
<i>Cumulative Impacts to SEA Integrity</i>	Cumulatively Less Than Significant
<i>Cumulative Impacts to Natural Open Areas</i>	Cumulatively Significant
<i>Cumulative Impacts to Wildlife Movement Within Lyon Canyon</i>	Cumulatively Less Than Significant

Each of these impacts to the biological resources onsite that may result from the Lyons Canyon Ranch project contribute to the cumulative adverse effects of impacts to the total biological resources in the general region (Santa Clarita Valley region of Los Angeles County). Mitigation and/or monitoring measures are recommended to prevent and reduce significant impacts to less-than-significant levels where feasible.

Each of these identified impacts to the biological resources onsite (listed above in Table 2) are discussed further in Section 5, Project Impacts. Impacts are assessed for direct, indirect, and cumulative resource losses for the known and expected botanical and faunal resources onsite. Mitigation measures are recommended for any significant adverse impacts resulting from the subject project in Section 6, Mitigation Measures.