

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF WORK

I. PROJECT SUMMARY

A. *APPLICANT*

Sinclair Real Estate Company
Stephen Holding
550 East South Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

B. *LOCATION*

The subject property is an approximately 265-acre oceanfront property bounded on the south by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by Vieja Drive and Mockingbird Lane, on the west by Orchid Drive, and on the east by Hope Ranch (Via Roblada). The property, commonly known as More Mesa, extends approximately one mile in length (east-west) and one-half mile in width (north-south). The property consists of six distinct parcels, including APNs 065-320-001, -002, -007, -008, -009, and -010. The property is located in the Goleta Planning Area in the 2nd Supervisorial District of Santa Barbara County.

C. *REQUEST/DESCRIPTION*

The applicant has requested preparation of a biological resource study to examine the biological sensitivity of More Mesa, as required by Development Standard LUDS-GV-1.2 of the Goleta Community Plan. The purpose of the study is to “review the extent of the environmentally sensitive habitat designation for the site, the extent of developable area relative to biological resources, and the site’s relative importance to the related open lands within the Atascadero Creek ecosystem.” Pursuant to Development Standard LUDS-GV-1.2 of the Goleta Community Plan, “the study shall provide recommendations to protect ESH areas from the adverse effects of development, including identification of all areas that shall not be disturbed, buffer areas to protect all ESH areas from uses on the site and other appropriate methods to avoid disturbance to sensitive resources. The study shall include a recommendation on areas to be subject to development, potential numbers of units, and those areas to be preserved as permanent open space. The results of the study are subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and Coastal Commission.” The study is required prior to accepting any increase in the developable area of More Mesa (40 acres) depicted in Figure 10 of the Goleta Community Plan (Attachment A) or any increase in the number of allowable residential units over 70 (up to a maximum of 100 units as identified in LUDS-GV-1.2).

D. *BACKGROUND*

As discussed in the County’s Local Coastal Plan (LCP), adopted in 1982, More Mesa contains a wide-variety of critical habitats. As such, a majority of the site is designated as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) under the LCP and Goleta Community Plan (GCP). Under the policies and development standards of the 1993 Goleta Community Plan, specific steps must be taken prior to pursuing any planned development on More Mesa, including preparation of a biological study as described above. Consistent with LCP policies, the Goleta Community Plan (GCP) provides policies and development standards regulating land use on More Mesa and the requirements for future development (DevStds LUDS-GV-1.1 – 1.12, pg 53 - 55). The GCP designates approximately 40 acres along the eastern edge of More Mesa as suitable for development with Planned Development-70 zoning, meaning a maximum of 70 dwelling units would be allowed on

this portion of the site. The rest of the site is currently designated as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) and unsuitable for development. As discussed above, in order to reconsider the 70-unit development limitation on More Mesa and the extent of the developable area, a biological study analyzing the site must occur as a first step in the process described in Development Standard LUDS-GV-1.2 of the GCP prior to any development proposal.

II. SCOPE OF BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE STUDY

A. PREVIOUS STUDY

A comprehensive evaluation of the biological sensitivity of More Mesa was prepared in 1982 by the Environmental Research Team of the UCSB Herbarium (part of the Department of Biological Sciences). The objectives of this initial study included:

- Inventory, classify, and map the vegetation and habitats of More Mesa and evaluate the sensitivity of vegetation communities, including wetlands, oak woodland, grasslands, and coastal scrub;
- Inventory the vascular plants and assess populations of any species of special concern;
- Inventory the birds and assess the importance of More Mesa for species of special concern, particularly the White-tailed kite, Burrowing owl, Short-eared owl, Marsh Hawk, and Merlin;
- Inventory the mammals, determine the presence of species of special concern, evaluate the importance of More Mesa as habitat for such species, and investigate the relationship between small mammals and foraging raptors;
- Inventory the reptiles and amphibians, determine the presence of any species of special concern, and evaluate the importance of More Mesa as habitat for such species;
- Delineate environmentally sensitive habitats throughout More Mesa as determined by the Coastal Act of 1976;
- Determine the relative importance of More Mesa and its sensitive habitats to the similar areas in the Goleta Planning Area;
- Evaluate the residential development potential of More Mesa based on the biological findings; and
- Recommend mitigation measures and locations of buffer zones designed to protect environmentally sensitive habitats should residential development occur.

The study was conducted over a full year (July 1981 through June 1982) and evaluated the various physiographic areas of More Mesa, including conducting an inventory of the various habitats, vegetation, flora, and vertebrate animals, including birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. The study included detailed maps of vegetation, grassland dominance types, wetlands, noteworthy plants, breeding (if appropriate), roosting and nesting areas of birds (including raptors), and locational information for amphibian and reptile species. In addition, the study included a relative sensitivity analysis based on the physiographic areas of More Mesa for the above species and habitats, and an integrated relative sensitivity analysis that delineated environmentally sensitive habitats, and roughly evaluated the development potential of the site. The study produced the following summarized findings (as excerpted directly from the 1982 study):

More Mesa contains various habitats, including Atascadero Creek, basins, ravines, slopes, marine terraces, local depressions, sand deposits, and coastal bluffs; upland vegetation, including Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, Stabilized Dune Scrub,

Southern Coastal Oak Woodland, and Cismontane Introduced Grasses; wetland vegetation, including riverine wetlands and palustrine wetlands such as emergent (for example, marshes and vernal pools), scrub/shrub, and forested wetlands; 195 vascular plant species, including 8 species of special concern at the local or regional level; approximately 178 bird species, including 4 raptors (Marsh Hawk, Merlin, Burrowing Owl, and Short-eared Owl) that forage the grasslands and are proposed as species of special concern at the State level, and White-tailed Kites that nest, forage and have their major regional winter roost here; 21 mammal species, none of which are of special concern but at least one of which (California Vole) is a major prey of the White-tailed Kite, Marsh Hawk, and Short-eared Owl; and 11 species of herpetofauna, including one salamander, three frogs, three snakes, three lizards and one turtle, the latter of which (Pacific Pond Turtle) is becoming rare in southern California.

The entire study site occurs within the Coastal Zone, as defined by the Santa Barbara County Local Coastal Program, and thus environmental concerns for the area are governed by the California Coastal-Act. The determination of the environmental sensitivity of portions or all of More Mesa depends on the biological evidence as interpreted according to definitions and guidelines of the California Coastal Commission. Using these tools we concluded that the entire study site, excepting minor portions of the eastern and western mesas, is an environmentally sensitive habitat area. Each physiographic area, as delineated for this study, contains habitats sensitive for at least one and often for a variety of seasons. The remaining marginal, non-sensitive areas are critical buffers for those areas that are sensitive and provide essential open space between currently developed areas and the sensitive habitat areas. Relative sensitivity analyses of the various physiographic areas and their habitats indicated that the ravines and basins are sensitive for a greater number of biological resources than are the grasslands; and that More Mesa is apparently more sensitive for birds than for the other resources investigated during this study. However, the most significant aspect of the environmental sensitivity of More Mesa is the ecosystem as a whole. The UCSB Environmental Research Team recommends that no development, including residential, commercial, or agricultural, should be permitted within the sensitive areas or buffer zones; only light recreation should be permitted on the site; More Mesa should be acquired either for public trust or for private foundation protection and management; and a program to manage the site should be developed and implemented to provide protection for this unique area.

The County designated approximately 225 acres of the More Mesa site as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH). This determination was made by the County Planning Commission and County Board of Supervisors over a series of public hearings in adopting the Goleta Community Plan in 1993.

B. SCOPE OF PROPOSED STUDY

As stated above in Section I.C, and within DevStd LUDS-GV-1.2 on page 50 of the GCP, the purpose of the proposed study is to review the extent of the ESH on the site to inform future decisions regarding development location and/or a change in the developable area or a change in the allowed number of units on the More Mesa site. The prospective study shall follow a similar format as the study completed in 1982. Special attention shall be paid to how habitats and species previously identified and evaluated have changed, if at all, since the 1982 study in terms of their status or extent, or in the level of sensitivity of such resources, including within a regional context.

Setting: More Mesa consists of a terrace surrounded on the north, west, and south by bottomlands of the Goleta Valley, the Goleta Slough, and the Pacific Ocean, respectively. The site is generally flat, ranging from 80 to 130 feet above sea level, with two ravine systems which drain into Atascadero Creek to the north of the site. The area is characterized by a Mediterranean climate and is underlain by shale, siltstone and sands, from which clay, sandy loam, and loamy sand soils have been derived. Vegetation/habitat types generally include grassland, oak woodland, coastal scrub, and wetland (including vernal pool). Current use of the site is characterized primarily by light recreation, including hiking, cycling, and beach access through a system of dirt trails.

Scope: The biological resource study shall include the following investigations and evaluations and shall cover the extent of the More Mesa property, including lands along the peripheries. The study shall be of sufficient length to cover the extent of seasonal variation associated with the identified resources on site (note that the previous study was conducted over a period of approximately one year).

Task 1: Review Past Studies and Reports

The consultant will review existing biological surveys and investigations of the site and its immediate surroundings, including those studies referenced in Section II.C below. Sections of the 1982 report that are still applicable will be identified. A study area and a region of influence will be defined. The study area and region of influence may vary depending on the unique resource in question (e.g. plants versus birds); this variability will be identified and discussed. A template has been provided (Attachment B) to help in the identification of the geographic scope or extent of study area for each unique resource, to be completed by the consultant. A site visit may be warranted for orientation purposes.

Task 2: Conduct General Field Surveys/Investigations

The consultant will conduct detailed field surveys of the different habitats, vegetation communities, and physiographic areas of More Mesa to determine the overall extent and condition of habitats throughout the site. These investigations will include detailed surveys of vascular (and non-vascular if appropriate) plants and wildlife species, including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Information gathered during the field investigations shall be augmented with a review of pertinent literature on the regional status and distribution of plant communities, habitats, and identified flora and fauna. Wildlife surveys will identify the species present, their distribution on the site, and an identification of what aspects of More Mesa are critical to their persistence and maintenance of normal population fluctuations. The wildlife surveys shall also include a detailed survey of the prey base of raptors. The importance of the grassland habitats on More Mesa shall be evaluated in the context of the study of the prey-base of raptors. Surveys shall specifically target listed or sensitive species. The project site shall be evaluated in context with surrounding properties with respect to ecological function. The issue of connectivity and ecological relationships with other properties in the area shall be addressed. Updated maps for all resources, as determined appropriate by the consultant and County staff, shall be prepared.

Winter surveys are required to ascertain use of the site by wintering raptors and migratory birds. Spring surveys are required to ascertain the breeding status for birds. The onset of the nesting season for resident birds may occur as early as late January. White-tailed kites may begin pair bond formation in mid-winter, while actual nesting may take place from early March through July. The peak of nesting activity for most resident and migratory

birds is April and May. In addition, a winter survey is necessary to determine the status of migratory birds (winter visitors), other sensitive bird species, and the potential for communal roosting by White-tailed kites (per Task 3, below). Surveys of plant species should be floristic in nature and survey methodology shall be consistent with the Department of Fish and Game's Guidelines for Assessing the Effects of Development on Rare Plants and Natural Communities (May 1984). Grassland surveys will be timed to ensure that the presence and identity of native annuals is fully documented. County staff and consultants shall confirm the timing and methodology of surveys as part of the final scope of work.

As part of this investigation, invasive exotic species shall be mapped and evaluated to determine their potential impacts to sensitive habitats, vegetation, and wildlife on the site. Opportunities for restoration of these habitats shall be identified.

Native grassland habitats will be mapped using the California Department of Fish and Game's methodology, i.e. areas containing 10% or greater relative cover of native grassland species.

Voucher specimens will be collected and housed at appropriate herbariums (UCSB or Santa Barbara Botanic Garden) to document the presence of plant species at More Mesa. The site location of each specimen collected will be identified on appropriate site maps.

Climatic variations may play a role in the extent and distribution of wildlife on the site as well as the nature and extent of wetlands and other habitats. Historical data from different climatic regimes should be considered, where possible, to provide comparisons between drought and non-drought years.

A vegetation map identifying the various plant communities and habitats on site will be prepared and included in the final report.

Task 3: Conduct White-tailed Kite Investigation

White-tailed kites are known to roost and nest on More Mesa (Ball, 2003; Ferren and others 1982). The consultant will perform a detailed investigation of the White-tailed Kite population on More Mesa, including analysis of historical data, evaluation of the fluctuation of the kite population and size of kite territories, assessment of the impacts of years of high and low small mammal density, and an evaluation of long-term foraging, roosting, and nesting patterns onsite and relative to other nesting and foraging areas on the south coast. The investigation shall include an evaluation of the long-term use of More Mesa as a communal roost and factors that could affect the suitability of the site for such use (e.g. trails, development, homeless camps, etc.). Kites nesting away from More Mesa but using the site for foraging shall also be examined. Both raptor surveys and roosting surveys shall be performed consistent with appropriate agency survey protocol.

Task 4: Conduct Formal Wetland Delineations and Identify On-site Wetlands

Formal wetland delineations using both the County/CDFG/California Coastal Commission (Cowardin) and Federal (Army Corps of Engineers) criteria will be performed across the site in potential wetland areas so that wetlands under both jurisdictions are identified. The Cowardin classification system requires the presence of one or more of the three wetland parameters (vegetation, soils, or hydrology) in defining a wetland, whereas the Army Corps of Engineers method requires the presence of all three parameters in defining the existence and extent of a wetland. As part of this analysis, the consultant shall examine

the expansion or contraction of wetlands throughout More Mesa relative to past studies, including any emerging wetlands and vernal pools now in existence. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Interim Arid West Regional Supplement to the Wetland Delineation Manual" (December 2006) shall be used for delineations. All supporting documents and field data shall be included in the report in addition to a map showing the wetland boundaries. Consideration will be given to climatic variation and the presence or absence of drought conditions at the time of the delineations. The study will include an identification of wetland watersheds and recommended buffers necessary to protect wetlands and their functions. Connectivity between wetlands will also be identified and evaluated where applicable.

Task 5: Species Sensitivity Update and Evaluation

The consultant will identify and evaluate the sensitivity of identified special status flora and fauna, including special status species included on Federal, State, or other appropriate lists (i.e. endangered, threatened, species of special concern, etc.). Species not found on such lists but which are considered locally rare or sensitive shall also be identified and evaluated. The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden list of locally rare plant species shall be used to further identify locally and regionally rare species of concern. Updated lists for special status species shall be included in the report. Focused surveys for special status species, including raptors such as burrowing owl, marsh hawk, and white-tailed kite shall be conducted. It is not expected that California red-legged frog (Threatened) would be located on the site; however, since the closest known occurrences are in Montecito and western Goleta (Ellwood area), the species shall be discussed. In addition, the potential for Western Snowy Plover (Threatened) to occur on the site's beaches shall be evaluated. A winter survey shall be performed as well to assess the existence of Monarch Butterfly roosts and, if present, collect mating and roosting data for the Monarch Butterfly in existing habitat on More Mesa. Current records indicate Monarch Butterfly habitat in close proximity to, but not within, the More Mesa site. South Coast regional and site-specific status of each of the identified sensitive species shall be addressed in the final report. "Site-specific status" refers to the species' extent, habitat association, and type of use (e.g. breeding, roosting, foraging, resident, or transient). The consultant shall also identify upland areas used by semi-aquatic amphibians (such as southwestern pond turtle, two-striped garter snake, CRLF and possibly others) for nesting, hibernation and refuge during episodes of high rainfall.

Task 6A: Habitat Sensitivity Update and Evaluation

The consultant will evaluate the environmental sensitivity of the various physiographic areas, habitats, and vegetation communities, as well as the ecosystem as a whole. The sensitivity of these physiographic areas, habitats and vegetation communities from a regional context and how they relate to other open lands in the area will also be evaluated. As prescribed in the Goleta Community Plan, the County, in consultation with the consultant, will provide recommendations for the protection of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat from the adverse effects of development, including the identification of all areas that should not be disturbed and the identification of buffer areas to protect sensitive resources.

Task 6B: Options for Development

In light of the biological sensitivity of the resources on site, the County, in consultation with the consultant, shall provide recommended guidelines and options for development, the potential number of units, and areas to be preserved as permanent open space. Note

that these recommendations will be based on the issue of biological sensitivity; other issues beyond the scope of this study, such as public access or policy consistency, may affect the ultimate development outlook for the site.

Task 7: Prepare Comprehensive Report

The consultant will compile the above information in a detailed, comprehensive report. Deliverables will include an internal Administrative draft, public draft, and proposed final report. The appearance by the consultant at at least one public hearing may be required to explain the findings of the biological study.

Below is a table summarizing the proposed timing and frequency of surveys and other field work required to prepare the biological resource study. The timing and frequencies of surveys identified below are guidelines and suggestions. Consultants may revise the proposed survey schedules depending on the specific resources to be surveyed, survey protocol to be followed, and the available manpower to cover the extent of the site and species-potentially present as part of their proposed scope of work.

Proposed Summary of Field Work to be Completed by Consultant

Task/Survey Objective	Survey Interval/Timing	Survey Frequency
Task 1: Review Past Studies and Reports	Any time of year	Once
Task 2: Conduct General Field Surveys	Seasonal (depends on species and habitat type)	Multiple surveys to capture seasonal variation
Task 3: Conduct White-tailed Kite Investigation	Spring (breeding) and Late Fall/early Winter (roosting)	Two complete field surveys each period (minimum)
Task 4: Conduct Formal Wetland Delineations and Identify Wetlands	Late Winter/Spring	Once
Task 5: Species Sensitivity Update and Evaluation, Focused Surveys	As Follows:	As Follows:
- Vascular Plants	Spring through early Fall	One complete survey each season, minimum
- Non-vascular Plants	As needed	As needed
- Sensitive Birds	Spring (breeding) and Late Fall/Early Winter (roosting)	Two complete field surveys each period (five for raptors), minimum
- Sensitive Mammals	Spring through Fall	Two complete field surveys each season, minimum
- Sensitive Reptiles/Amphibians	Spring through Fall	Two complete field surveys each season, minimum
- Monarch Butterflies	Winter (peak in December/January)	As needed
- Other Sensitive Invertebrates	As needed	As needed
Task 6: Habitat Sensitivity Update and Evaluation	As needed	As needed

Task 7: Prepare Report	N/A	N/A
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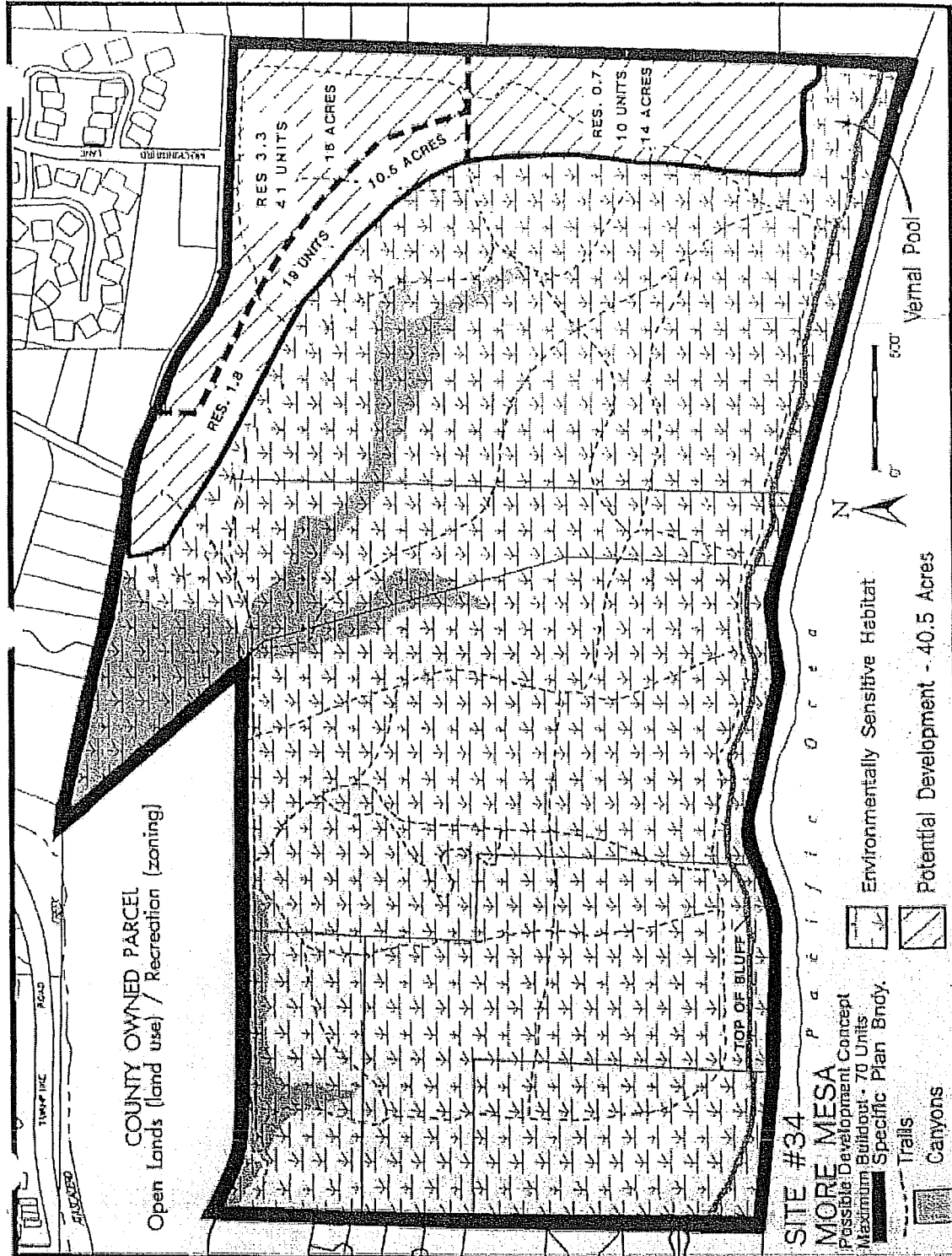
C. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

1. *Open Space Element, Page 58*, County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan, 1979.
2. *Conservation Element, page 137, page 166* County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan, 1980.
3. *Land Use Element*, County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan, 1980.
4. *Santa Barbara County Coastal Plan*, January 1982
5. *A Biological Evaluation of More Mesa*. Edited by Wayne Ferren, Jr., 1982.
6. *Vernal Pool Survey of More Mesa and Isla Vista*. Wayne Ferren, 1989.
7. *Ellwood Beach Open Space and Habitat Management Program*. LSA Associates, 1991
8. *Goleta Community Plan EIR*. County of Santa Barbara, 1991.
9. *Goleta Community Plan*. County of Santa Barbara, 1993.
10. *Biological Assessment and Management Plan for the County Parks Property on More Mesa*. John Storrer, 1993.
11. *Draft Status Review of the White-tailed Kite*. LSA Associates, 1993.
12. *Final EIR, Atascadero Creek Maintenance Project*. Woodward-Clyde Consultants, 1994.
13. *Goleta Trails Implementation Study*. County of Santa Barbara, 1995.
14. *Preliminary Biological Report, More Mesa, Goleta*. LSA Associates, 1996.
15. *Draft Biological Resources Study of More Mesa*. Zev Labinger/Planning & Development Department, 1997-8. (Study commenced but not completed.)
16. *A Winter Avifauna Study of More Mesa, Santa Barbara County, California*. Prepared by Zev Labinger and Dr. Stephen Laymon for Santa Barbara County P&D, 1997.
17. *Goleta Slough Management Plan*, 1997.
18. *Biological Resources Assessment, More Mesa, Goleta*. LSA Associates, 1997.
19. *Santa Barbara County 2030 – Open Lands*. County of Santa Barbara, 2002.
20. *Historical Kite Data collected by Morgan Ball, UCSB*, 1998-2003.
21. *Biological Survey of 1075 Mockingbird Lane*. Lawrence Hunt, 1999.
22. *Biological Survey of 4865 Vieja Drive*. Mark de la Garza, 2001.
23. *Wetland Survey and Delineation Report, 4865 Vieja Drive*. Mark de la Garza, 2002.
24. Unofficial Data on Kite Use Locations, Morgan Ball, May 2003.
25. *Assessment of Existing Conditions and Potential for Raptor Roosting/Nesting at Proposed Subdivision Residential Development at 4865 Vieja Drive*. Lawrence Hunt, 2004.
26. *Final Wetland Restoration Plan, 4865 Vieja Drive*. Mark de la Garza, 2006.
27. *Topographic Survey of More Mesa*. Penfield and Smith, 2006.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Goleta Community Plan Figure 10, More Mesa
Attachment B – Resource Specific Study Area Template

ATTACHMENT A: GOLETA COMMUNITY PLAN, MORE MESA



ATTACHMENT B: RESOURCE-SPECIFIC STUDY AREA TEMPLATE
 (To be filled out by consultant)

Resource	Scope/Extent of Study Area (i.e. site only, site plus adjacent lands, site plus 500 feet, South Coast region, etc.)
<u>Habitats</u>	
Wetlands	
Native Grasslands	
Oak Woodlands	
Monarch Butterfly Roosts	
Coastal Sage Scrub	
Vernal Pools	
Raptor Roosts	
Riparian Woodlands	
<i>Other</i>	
<i>Other</i>	
<u>Species</u>	
White-tailed Kite	
Burrowing Owl	
Short-eared Owl	
Marsh Hawk	
Merlin	
Screech Owl	
Pacific Pond Turtle	
Monarch Butterfly	
Horned Pondweed	
Pacific Foxtail	
Canary Grass	
Popcorn Flower	
Eryngium	
Western Goldenrod	
Bur-reed	
Native Grass Species	
Native annual forbs	
<i>Other</i>	
<i>Other</i>	