4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section describes the biological resources present on the project site (the 4.92-acre condominium development site and the 1.1-acre Camino Vista easement); areas surrounding the project site that could be affected by grading and/or fuel modification; and an approximately 4.7-acre stockpile located on the Willow Springs North property that would be used for on-site fill requirements (referred to herein as the northern stockpile). The project site and these various impact area boundaries are shown on Figure 4.3-1.

4.3.1 Existing Conditions

Methodology

This analysis is based on a literature review, as well as a field investigation and biological survey of the project site and surrounding area by Envicom Corporation on July 16, 2010. The analysis also relies upon a biological assessment of the site conducted in 2008 by Dudek.

Literature Review

The literature review included previous site-specific and non site-specific studies and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) publications and databases, as follows:

- **Historical Grading Activities on the Los Carneros Community Site, Goleta, California**, MAC Design Associates, June 1997;
- **Willow Springs II Drainage Plan**, Mac Design Associates, October 20, 2008;
- **Willow Springs II Coastal Sage Scrub Mitigation Plan, City of Goleta, California**, Dudek and Associates, June 9, 2009;
- **Willow Springs II Coastal Sage Scrub Mitigation Plan, City of Goleta, California**, Dudek and Associates, August 17, 2009;
- **Willow Springs II Conceptual Mitigation Plan**, Suding Design, 2009;
- **City of Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan Conservation Element, City of Goleta**, Adopted October 2, 2006 and Amended November 17, 2009;
- **Draft Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan [working draft]**, City of Santa Barbara, December 1997;
- **California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Rarefind 3 Element Occurrence Report for Dos Pueblos Canyon, Goleta, Lake Cachuma, Little Pine Mountain, San Marcos Pass, and Santa Barbara Quadrangles**, California Department of Fish and Game, data as of July 2010;
- **Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS)**, California Department of Fish and Game, data as of July 2010;
- **List of Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens**, California Department of Fish and Game, January 2010;
- **Special Animals**, California Department of Fish and Game, July 2009;
4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- List of California Vegetation Alliances, California Department of Fish and Game Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, December 28, 2009;
- List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database, California Department of Fish and Game Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, September 2003; and,
- CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants, version 7-10b, California Native Plant Society, data as of July 14, 2010.

Biological Surveys

Envicom Corporation biologist Mr. James Anderson conducted a vascular plant survey; wildlife observations; vegetation mapping; and a search for rare, threatened, and endangered species, sensitive natural communities, and potential jurisdictional resources on July 16, 2010. Surveys were conducted on foot and covered the project site, a 200-foot buffer surrounding the project site, and the northern stockpile area. Wildlife species were identified by direct observation, vocalization, or by sign (e.g. tracks, scat, burrows). Mr. Anderson also conducted site visits to nearby Los Carneros Creek and the Los Carneros Wetland, as well as an investigation of potential corridors for wildlife movement at, and in the vicinity of, the project site.

Dudek biologists Ms. Tricia Wotipka and Mr. Marcus Obregon conducted a biological investigation of the project site and vicinity on February 8, 2008, which included an assessment of the condition and quality of habitats present, vegetation mapping; and identification of plant and wildlife species at the site. Site surveys also involved a search for wetlands and rare, threatened, and endangered species.

Environmental Setting

Regional Setting

The project site is situated on a coastal plain and lies within the 45-square mile Goleta Slough watershed, approximately one and one-half miles north of the Pacific Ocean and one mile south of the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The Goleta Slough is a large expanse of wetlands and estuarine habitats located downstream and generally south of the project site. The Draft Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan (GSEMP) provides a comprehensive framework for ecosystem management and impact mitigation within the Goleta Slough Ecosystem. The Plan area is comprised of all areas currently or historically within the tidally influenced basin of the Goleta Slough, and apparently includes the southern portion of the project site. A map of the project site and the surrounding area, which includes the Goleta Slough and GSEMP boundary, is shown on Figure 4.3-2.

The climate of the Goleta coastal plain is Mediterranean, characterized by a warm, dry “summer,” extending from May through October and a mild, moist “winter” lasting from November through April. Due to the moderating effect of the Pacific Ocean and lower elevations, temperatures are less extreme along the coastal plain compared to more inland locations. Summer maximum temperatures average in the 70s (degrees Fahrenheit), while minimums average in the 50s to low 60s. Maximum temperatures during the winter months average in the 60s, with minimums in the 40s. Temperatures slightly below freezing are not uncommon during the coldest mornings of the year. Annual precipitation is approximately 18 inches, the majority of which is produced by winter storm systems from the north Pacific. Precipitation also rarely results from summer tropical moisture. Fog and low clouds are most
Source: General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan, Figure 4-1, 2009. Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan, 1997.
frequent during spring and summer when the ocean is relatively cool and the marine layer is drawn inland by the rising of warm air above the land. The warmest, driest conditions occur in the fall, when fog is infrequent.

Much of the coastal plain in the Goleta area between the Santa Ynez Mountains and Pacific Ocean is developed or has been historically disturbed by agriculture or ranching uses. Relatively undisturbed habitats are present along narrow riparian corridors, in scattered undeveloped lands of varying sizes, and in protected open space areas. The habitats and wildlife resources of the area reflect those typically found within the coastal plains of southern California. Native vegetation within the City of Goleta (City) is fragmented, and consists primarily of riparian and upland woodlands and coastal scrub.

**Project Site and Northern Stockpile**

The project site is generally flat with some minor variation in topography due to prior grading and an earthen stockpile. Elevations range from approximately 20 to 35 feet above mean sea level. The USDA Soil Conservation Service has mapped and classified the soils as fine sandy loam, although portions of the area also contain fill materials. Vegetation reflects historical and ongoing soil disturbance and therefore consists predominately of non-native species. Coyote brush scrub has become established in a slight depression in the central portion of the project site.

The northern stockpile has been recently graded and is largely barren or only sparsely vegetated with weeds. A large portion of the stockpile contains several rock debris piles.

Los Carneros Creek flows approximately 500 feet to the north of the project site parallel to the 101 Freeway, and 450 feet to the east of the project site in an open concrete-lined channel. The approximately 7-acre Los Carneros Wetland is located to the south between the Willow Springs I development and Hollister Avenue (See Figure 4.3-2). The Los Carneros Wetland receives stormwater flows from the Willow Springs I development, and likely receives a portion of the stormwater runoff from the project site.

Between Willow Springs I and II is an oval-shaped private open space preserve area, referred to as Lot 20. The open space area primarily contains non-native grasses and forbs, which appear to be mowed routinely for fuel control purposes, and sparse amounts of coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*). The perimeter of the open space contains a private recreational trail accessible to Willow Springs residents, which is landscaped with a combination of ornamental and native species.

**Historical Grading and Agricultural Use**

A historical analysis of the project site determined the site has a long history of agricultural use. The site has been consistently disturbed through clearing and grading activities (Mac Design Associates, 1997). The analysis involved a review of relevant documents and aerial photographs for the period from 1928 to 1996. Recent aerial photographs from 2005 and 2010 were also reviewed. Before 1928, the project site was used for agriculture and grazing. Between 1928 and continuing through the 1950s, the site was used for extensive farming operations, with various portions cultivated in row crops while other areas were planted in orchards. By the early 1960s, agricultural operations were curtailed or greatly reduced and surrounding areas were converted to development. In 1986 and again in 1995, an area encompassing the entire project site and the Willow Springs North property were mass graded,
involving clearing and grubbing of trees and other vegetation. Portions of the project site and the Willow Springs North property were also graded in late-1989.

**Existing Biological Resources**

*Vegetation and Sensitive Plant Communities*

Plant communities at the project site and northern stockpile area were identified from those plant communities included in the *List of California Vegetation Alliances* and the *List of California Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database*, published by the CDFG in December 2009 and September 2003, respectively. These two documents together present a comprehensive list, as of December 2009, of officially recognized plant communities occurring within the State of California. *A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd ed.* was also consulted for its descriptions and classification rules for plant community alliances. Figure 4.3-1 presents a vegetation and landcover map of the project site and the northern stockpile area.

The plant communities listed in the *List of California Vegetation Alliances*, the *List of California Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database*, and *A Manual of California Vegetation – 2nd ed.* are classified based on a hierarchical system where alliances are the more generic unit of classification and contain more specifically defined associations. This classification system is used by CNPS and CDFG to map, classify and establish the significance and rarity of vegetation types in California. Alliances and associations are defined by plant species composition and abundance, as well as the underlying abiotic characteristics of the stand, e.g., slope, aspect or soil type.

The acreage of plant communities at the project site and the northern stockpile is summarized in Table 4.3-1, below. Vegetation within a 0.2-acre 10-foot buffer of the Camino Vista right-of-way is also included herein, as the area would be within the project limits of disturbance. In particular, grading activities for the Camino Vista Road extension would occur in this area. Each of the communities present at the site and within off-site impact areas is described below.

A conservation status rank (also known as “rarity rank”) or a “high inventory priority” designation is used to determine the sensitivity of plant communities. The *List of California Vegetation Alliances* provides a conservation status rank for each Alliance, and the *List of California Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database* identifies plant communities that are of “high inventory priority.” The conservation status ranking system, which was developed by NatureServe and has been adopted by the CDFG, consists of a geographic scale (G=Global; S=State) and a degree of threat (1=critically imperiled; 2=imperiled; 3=vulnerable to extirpation or extinction; 4=apparently secure; and 5=demonstrably widespread, abundant, or secure). Plant community alliances with global or state conservation status ranks of G1 through G3, or S1 through S3, respectively, are sensitive. Plant communities identified to be of “high inventory priority” are also sensitive. Sensitive plant communities are protected pursuant to CEQA; therefore, impacts to these communities must be avoided or mitigated.
### Table 4.3-1
Vegetation and Plant Communities at the Project Site and Northern Stockpile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetation/Plant Community*</th>
<th>Project Site (acres)</th>
<th>Off-site Northern Stockpile (acres)</th>
<th>Camino Vista Buffer (acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shrublands</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coyote Brush Scrub (<strong>Baccharis pilularis</strong>) [32.060.00]</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Native Herbaceous Vegetation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native Grasses and Forbs</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Mustard Herbaceous Stands (<strong>Brassica nigra</strong>)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren or Sparsely-Vegetated Areas**</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Acres</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Classification of plant communities (Alliances and Associations) at the site is based on Sawyer, J.O. et. al. (2009), A Manual of California Vegetation – 2nd ed.; California Department of Fish and Game (2009), List of California Vegetation Alliances; and, California Department of Fish and Game (2003), List of California Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Database. Numbers in brackets following plant communities correspond with codes in the relevant document, when applicable.

** Includes areas depicted on Figure 4.3-1 as Barren or Sparsely-Vegetated Graded Areas, Debris Piles, and Gravel Surfaces.

**Coyote Brush Scrub**

Coyote brush scrub at the site is a relatively open stand dominated by coyote bush (**Baccharis pilularis**) with an understory of non-native grasses and forbs. The coyote brush scrub occurs within the project site and the project’s anticipated fuel modification zone. The shrub layer consists almost exclusively of coyote bush. California sagebrush (**Artemisia californica**) is present, but at less than one percent of the total shrub cover. There are no other sage species present (i.e. species of the genus **Salvia** or **Artemisia**). Commonly-occurring species in the understory herbaceous layer include sweet fennel (**Foeniculum vulgare**), summer mustard (**Hirschfeldia incana**), scarlet pimpernel (**Anagallis arvensis**), filarees (**Erodium spp.**), rattail fescue (**Vulpia myuros**), and soft chess (**Bromus hordeaceous**).

Coyote bush is an early colonizer of disturbed areas. The coyote brush scrub on-site has become established in a slight depression, presumably in the last 15 years since the site was last mass graded. Due to the project site’s long history of agricultural use and grading, the coyote brush scrub contains low native species diversity, is infested by invasive species, and has lower overall biological value as compared to coyote brush scrub in less disturbed condition.

The coyote brush scrub at the site is classified as the Coyote Brush Scrub Alliance. The Coyote Brush Scrub/annual grasses Association of The Coyote Brush Scrub Alliance receives a G5S5 conservation status rank, and the Coyote Brush Scrub/annual grasses Association is not considered to be of “high inventory priority.” Therefore, the CDFG does not consider the coyote brush scrub at the site to be a sensitive natural community.
The general area of the project site containing the coyote brush scrub is currently designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) by the City’s General Plan/Local Coastal Plan (General Plan), wherein it is mapped as “coastal sage scrub” (see the heading Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas, later in this section for a detailed discussion of the ESHA status of the coyote brush scrub at the site).

Non-native Grasses and Forbs
Areas mapped as non-native grasses and forbs consist overwhelmingly of introduced non-native species, with native species poorly represented. Summer mustard, Smilo grass (*Piptatherum miliaceum*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), soft chess, and foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*) are prevalent. Other selected non-native species occurring in notable quantities are long-beaked filaree (*Erodium botrys*), bristly ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca [<= Picris] echoides*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), and Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*). These species may be well distributed or may be concentrated in certain areas of the site. Native species represent much less than five percent of the vegetative cover. Among these species are Canada horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), common tarweed (*Deinandra fasciculata*), and western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*). As is typical with most vegetation maintained in a ruderal condition by frequent disturbance, these areas do not classify well using the CDFG plant community classification system. Therefore, these areas were not defined as a recognized plant community alliance or association. However, because they are comprised almost exclusively of non-native invasive species, areas mapped as Non-native Grasses and Forbs are clearly non-sensitive.

Black Mustard Herbaceous Stands
Areas classified as Black Mustard Herbaceous Stands consist of dense herbaceous stands strongly dominated by invasive black mustard (*Brassica nigra*). Several other non-native species also occur, but natives are notably lacking. This community does not receive a conservation status rank and is not considered to be of “high inventory priority.” Because it is comprised almost exclusively of non-native invasive species, areas dominated by black mustard are clearly non-sensitive.

Barren or Sparsely-Vegetated Areas
These areas have been recently graded or are subject to routine disturbance, leaving them barren or sparsely vegetated. Plant species consist overwhelmingly of non-native species, as well as occasional native species common to highly disturbed areas.

Plant Communities/Habitats - California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)
A review of the California Department of Fish and Game’s Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) Rarefind 3 commercial application (July 3, 2010) revealed three Sensitive Plant Communities/Habitats have been reported within the Goleta Quadrangle, or within adjacent quadrangles, namely Southern California Steelhead Stream, Southern Coastal Salt Marsh, and Southern Vernal Pool. These communities are absent from the project site.

**Plant Species**
A botanical survey of the project site, the northern stockpile, and a 200-foot buffer surrounding the project site on July 16, 2010 identified a total of 72 vascular plant species, including 49 non-
native and 19 native species.\(^1\) A list of sensitive species known to occur within the Goleta and eight surrounding 7.5’ USGS quadrangles was obtained from the CNDDDB and was used during the biological survey for reference.

Appendix B presents a comprehensive list of the vascular plants observed during the July 16, 2010 survey. Identifications of vascular plant species were made using *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California* (Hickman [ed.] 1993), and reflect taxonomic or nomenclatural changes since the publication of Hickman 1993 from The Jepson Herbarium Online Interchange.

**Sensitive Plant Species**

Sensitive plant species either have unique biological significance, limited distribution, restricted habitat requirements, particular susceptibility to human disturbance, or a combination of these factors. Herein, we reserve the term “sensitive” to denote those species that meet the criteria of CEQA Section 15380 as an Endangered, Rare or Threatened Species, whether or not officially listed, as provided in Section 15380(d). Our discussion of sensitive plant species includes those that meet either of the following:

- Plant species that are listed, proposed for listing, or meet the criteria for listing as endangered, threatened, or rare under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) or California Endangered Species Act (CESA); or,
- Plant species that are listed on the California Department of Fish and Game’s (CDFG) Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes and Lichens List, which includes the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants. Plants on the CNPS List 1B (which includes rare, threatened, or endangered species, in CNPS’s opinion, in California and elsewhere) and List 2 (plants considered rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere) are considered sensitive.

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15125(a), also directs that special emphasis should be placed on resources that are rare or unique to the region.

An assessment of the potential for occurrence of sensitive plant species based on recorded elements within the California Natural Diversity Database and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants is provided in Appendix B. No sensitive vascular plant species listed by the City, the CDFG, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as sensitive, special-status, rare, threatened and/or endangered, or that would otherwise be of concern were found during Envicom Corporation’s 2010 survey, or during the February 8, 2008 survey by Dudek biologists.

It is acknowledged that conducting biological field surveys in July and February does not ensure that all of the listed plant species known to occur in the Goleta area would be located and identified, if one or more were present. However, based on the long history of agricultural use and soil disturbance at the project site and the northern stockpile area, and because these areas were mass graded on at least two occasions since 1986, the potential for occurrence of listed plant species is considered to be very low. Furthermore, competition from invasive species within portions of the site and northern stockpile, mapped as non-native grasses and

---

\(^1\) The native/non-native status of four species that were identified only to the genus was not determined.
forbs or black mustard, further reduces the potential for occurrence of listed species in those areas. If a sensitive vascular plant species persists or has become re-established, it would likely occur within, or on the margins of, the coyote brush scrub, where at some locations the cover of invasive species is sparse.

**Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)**

**Coastal Sage Scrub “ESHA”**

The general area of the project site that consists of coyote brush scrub is currently designated an ESHA pursuant to the City’s General Plan, wherein it is mapped on Figure 4-1 of the Conservation Element as “coastal sage scrub.” The area designated ESHA is located in the central portion of the project site and extends into adjacent undeveloped areas to the northwest (See Figure 4-1 City’s General Plan Conservation Element). A description of the coyote brush scrub is provided under a preceding heading, Vegetation and Sensitive Plant Communities. Despite its current designation, the coyote brush scrub does not meet the criteria in relevant City’s General Plan policies to be considered an ESHA or coastal sage scrub; and therefore, should not be subject to the ESHA protection policies of the City of Goleta General Plan/Local Coastal Plan. Conservation Element policy CE 1.5: Corrections to Map of ESHAs allows ESHAs to be removed from Figure 4-1 of the General Plan if a site-specific biological study demonstrates substantial evidence that the area does not in fact contain habitat that meets the definition of an ESHA. The project includes a General Plan Amendment to remove the Coastal Sage Scrub ESHA designation from the project site is being concurrently processed. An Addendum to the Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan Final EIR (SCH #2005031151) is concurrently being prepared for this amendment and is available for public review at City Hall, 130 Cremona Drive, Suite B, Goleta, California 93117. The This General Plan Amendment would specifically amend Open Space Element Figure 3-5 (Open Space Plan Map) and Conservation Element Figure 4-1 (Special-Status Species and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas).

The coyote brush scrub found on-site does not meet the definition of coastal sage scrub outlined in CE 5.3 of the General Plan Conservation Element. The coyote brush scrub does not have the compositional characteristics of coastal sage scrub, as described in *Preliminary Descriptions of Terrestrial Natural Communities of California* (Holland 1986). Holland (1986) does not include coyote bush as a characteristic species of coastal sage scrub, and the scrub vegetation at the site lacks any significant cover of any sage species. Furthermore, *A Manual of California Vegetation 2nd ed.* (2009), which sets forth the most current natural community classification system recognized by the CDFG, does not list coyote brush scrub as a component of coastal sage scrub.

The coyote brush scrub does not meet City’s General Plan Policy CE 1.1a or CE 1.1b definitions of ESHA, and is not “rare or especially valuable because of its special nature or role in an ecosystem,” when considering the sum of the following conditions:

- Coyote brush scrub is a common plant community. Coyote brush scrub receives the lowest rarity ranking (G5S5) and is not considered sensitive by the State of California;
- The coyote brush scrub at the site is disturbed, contains high cover of invasive species, low native plant species diversity, and has become established at the site relatively recently since the area was last graded. The site has been subject to agricultural activity related earth disturbance for much of the last 100 years;
4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Listed wildlife species are not expected to reproduce at the site, and the site is not essential to the life-cycle of any listed wildlife species;
- Listed plant species have not been found at the site, and are not expected due to prior grading and agricultural use, as well as the site’s existing disturbed condition; and,
- The coyote brush scrub is within an urban area, adjacent to existing industrial and residential development, and is not contiguous with native habitats.

Los Carneros Wetland ESHA

The Los Carneros Wetland is designated ESHA pursuant to the City’s General Plan. The Los Carneros Wetland is an approximately 7.25-acre open space area located north of Hollister Avenue, east of Los Carneros Way, and southwest of the residential units at Willow Springs I (See Figure 4.3-2). The wetland is approximately 600 feet southwest of the Willow Springs II project site boundary. The Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan (GSEMP) considered the Los Carneros Wetland a major subarea of the Goleta Slough Ecosystem.

The Los Carneros Wetland is a rare, surviving remnant freshwater-to-estuarine transitional habitat at the northern edge of the Goleta Slough. There are areas of brackish and freshwater marsh, as well as willow-dominated, palustrine scrub-shrub/forested wetlands that were once part of a continuous corridor connecting Lake Los Carneros and the Goleta Slough. The site has historically supported nesting and roosting white-tailed kites (Elanus leucurus) [California Fully Protected Species]. The wetland is also known as a roosting and foraging habitat for the northern harrier (Circus cyaneus) [California Species of Special Concern], short-eared owl (Asio flammeus) [California Species of Special Concern], sharp-shinned hawk (Accipiter striatus), and Cooper’s hawk (Accipter cooperii), and supports the only Goleta Valley location for yerba mansa (Anemopsis californica), a locally important species according to the GSEMP. The Los Carneros Wetland is upstream from and connected to the Goleta Slough by way of a small culvert running north-south beneath Hollister Road.

The Los Carneros Wetland serves as an approved detention basin area and bio-filter for stormwater flows from the existing Willow Springs I development. Stormwater runoff from the project site will also be conveyed to the Los Carneros Wetland for stormwater detention and biofiltration. (Refer to Section 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality for additional information regarding project drainage). The Los Carneros Wetland is also downstream from the project site.

Goleta Slough ESHA

The Goleta Slough is a large expanse of wetlands and estuarine habitats that supports a rich and diverse coastal ecosystem of biological and cultural importance, and provides important ecosystem services such as floodwater storage capacity and the filtering of pollutants contained within stormwater runoff. The Goleta Slough is located south of the project site between Hollister Avenue and the Pacific Ocean (See Figure 4.3-2). The Goleta Slough is the northernmost example of a large southern California estuary and represents the northern limit of distribution for several plant and animal species. The Slough contains breeding populations of listed species such as the federally-endangered Belding’s savanna sparrow (Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi) and the California Fully Protected white-tailed kite, as well as other species of state and local concern.
The importance of the Slough is recognized and reflected in its designation as an ESHA in the Local Coastal Plans of both the City and County of Santa Barbara. The Goleta Slough is downstream from the Los Carneros Wetland area and the project site.

**Wetlands**

No areas defined as wetlands by Federal, State or local policy were found at the Willow Springs II project site, within the 200-foot surveyed buffer surrounding the project site, or within the northern stockpile area. Furthermore, no jurisdictional areas or hydrological features of any kind were identified in these areas during biological surveys in 2010 or 2008.

**Observed Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat**

Vertebrate wildlife species observed during the July 16, 2010 biological survey included one lizard, 16 species of birds, and four species of mammals. Many of these species are typical of undeveloped weedy lots within urban areas or patches of native habitat within urban areas or at the urban-wildland interface. A list of these species is provided in Table 4.3-2, below. This list represents only a sample of the non-sensitive wildlife species that can be expected to utilize habitats at the site for cover, foraging, and reproduction. Furthermore, in general, this list includes species that are relatively common and more easily detected during daytime surveys. Several smaller species (e.g. some reptiles, birds, and rodents) undoubtedly reproduce within the project site, and some larger or more mobile species utilize the site’s resources occasionally or on an infrequent basis, such as foraging raptors, migrating songbirds, and medium to large-sized mammals such as coyotes, opossums, raccoons, and skunks. The northern stockpile is largely barren and devoid of vegetation and is generally poor habitat. In its current condition, the stockpile is marginal or unsuitable for cover or foraging for many species.

As described earlier under the Vegetation and Sensitive Plant Communities heading, the project site has a long history of disturbance. The type and number of species that are expected at the site reflects disturbed habitat conditions. Habitats supporting wildlife at the site are limited to non-native herbaceous vegetation and coyote brush scrub. The relatively low native plant, plant community and habitat diversity, as well as the small size of the patch of coyote brush scrub, limits available niche space and the type of wildlife species and number of individuals the site can support. Also, the project site’s proximity to urban areas and roads and associated night lighting, human activity and higher noise levels compared to more pristine native habitats is expected to dissuade many species from utilizing the area. Species using the site are those adapted to urban areas or at least somewhat tolerant of human activities.

The Goleta area is highly developed, and the extent of native habitats, including disturbed coyote brush scrub, has been reduced considerably. Consequently, habitat to support wildlife populations in the Goleta area is limited. The disturbed coyote brush scrub and the non-native vegetation at the project site and vicinity provide habitat resource value for a variety of wildlife species. The area supports rodent fauna, and several rodent burrows were observed at the site. This prey base is expected to attract mammalian and avian predators, including potentially several species of raptors. The project site may be a foraging resource for bats as well. Some migratory songbirds are expected to forage occasionally within the disturbed coyote brush scrub, especially because of the site’s proximity to the Goleta Slough, the Los Carneros Wetland, and Lake Los Carneros Open Space. The proximity of the project site to these important wetlands/open spaces increases the potential for wildlife to use the project site and vicinity.
Table 4.3-2
Vertebrate Wildlife Species Observed* at the Project Site
July 16, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reptiles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>western fence lizard</td>
<td><em>Sceloporus occidentalis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birds</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American crow</td>
<td><em>Corvus brachyrhynchos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna’s hummingbird</td>
<td><em>Calypte anna</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black phoebe</td>
<td><em>Sayornis nigricans</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bushtit</td>
<td><em>Psaltriparus minimus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California towhee</td>
<td><em>Pipilo crissalis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassin’s kingbird</td>
<td><em>Tyrannus melancholicus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European starling</td>
<td><em>Sturnus vulgaris</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house finch</td>
<td><em>Carpodacus mexicanus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesser goldfinch</td>
<td><em>Carduelis psaltria</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mourning dove</td>
<td><em>Zenaida macroura</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northern mockingbird</td>
<td><em>Mimus polyglottos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red-tailed hawk</td>
<td><em>Buteo jamaicensis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rock dove</td>
<td><em>Columba livia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>song sparrow</td>
<td><em>Melospiza melodia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>western kingbird</td>
<td><em>Tyrannus verticalis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white-tailed kite</td>
<td><em>Elanus leucurus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mammals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botta’s pocket gopher</td>
<td><em>Thomomys bottae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brush rabbit</td>
<td><em>Sylvilagus bachmani</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California ground squirrel</td>
<td><em>Otospermophilus beecheyi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coyote (tracks, scat)</td>
<td><em>Canis latrans</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* by direct observation, vocalization, or sign (e.g. burrows, scat, tracks).

While the project site itself lacks a stream or other water body, Los Carneros Creek is approximately 500 feet to the north and provides a permanent source of water for wildlife, as well as a potential movement corridor to larger areas of core habitat to the north. The site is also connected to the Goleta Slough via Los Carneros Creek, or via disturbed habitats, the Los Carneros Wetland, and a culvert beneath Hollister Avenue (See the *Wildlife Movement* heading later in this section).

**Sensitive Wildlife Species**

For the purposes of this analysis, the term “sensitive” is used to denote those species that meet the criteria of CEQA Guidelines Section 15380 as an Endangered, Rare or Threatened Species, whether or not officially listed, as provided in Section 15380(d). Our discussion of sensitive wildlife species includes those that are:

- Listed, proposed for listing, or meet the criteria for listing as endangered, threatened, or rare by under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) or California Endangered Species Act (CESA); or
• Listed on the CDFG’s Special Animals list with a designation of CSC (California Species of Special Concern)\(^2\) or CFP (California Fully Protected)\(^3\).

CEQA Guidelines, Section 15125(a), also directs that special emphasis should be placed on resources that are rare or unique to the region.

Sensitive wildlife species with potential to occur at the project site are listed in Table 4.3-3. A detailed potential for occurrence analysis is presented in Appendix B. The complete range of sensitive wildlife species from the California Natural Diversity Database with recorded observations in the Goleta and eight surrounding 7.5' USGS quadrangles, as well as sensitive species included on the CDFG list of Special Animals (July 2009) that are known to occur in the region were considered in the potential for occurrence analysis. The species that can be reasonably anticipated to occur were determined based on the reported ranges of the species, and the type and extent of habitat available at the site.

The use of the site by sensitive vertebrate wildlife species is limited to foraging by some species of birds and mammals listed as California Fully Protected (CFP) or Species of Special Concern (CSC) by the State of California. No species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act or the California Endangered Species Act is expected to have any reasonable potential to occur at the site. No sensitive species are expected to reproduce at the site.

Three white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*), a California Fully Protected species, were observed foraging over the coyote brush scrub and the Willow Springs North property during biological surveys on July 16, 2010. This was the only sensitive wildlife species observed, White-tailed kites have a long and well-documented history in the Goleta area. This species is discussed in more detail under the heading *Raptor Habitat*.

---

\(^2\) CSC - California Species of Special Concern.
A California Species of Special Concern is a species, subspecies or distinct population of an animal native to California that currently satisfies one or more of the following (not necessary mutually exclusive) criteria:
- Is extirpated from the State or, in the case of birds, in its primary seasonal or breeding role;
- Is listed as Federally- but not State-, threatened or endangered; meets the State definition of threatened or endangered but has not formally been listed;
- Is experiencing, or formerly experienced, serious (noncyclical) population declines or range retractions (not reversed) that, if continued or resumed, could qualify it for State threatened or endangered status; and
- Has naturally small populations exhibiting high susceptibility to risk from any factor(s), that if realized, could lead to declines that would qualify it for State threatened or endangered status.

\(^3\) CFP –California Fully Protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except for collecting these species for necessary scientific research and relocation of the bird species for the protection of livestock.
Table 4.3-3
Sensitive Vertebrate Wildlife Species with Potential to Occur at the Project Site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name (Scientific Name)</th>
<th>Status *</th>
<th>Occurrence on site (Observed, Potentially Occurring, Presumed Absent, Absent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern harrier (Circus cyaneus)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-tailed kite (Elanus leucurus)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaux’s swift (Chaetura vauxii)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black swift (Cypseloides niger)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loggerhead shrike (Lanius ludovicianus ludovicianus)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-breasted chat (Icteria virens)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow warbler (Dendroica petechia brewsteri)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasshopper Sparrow (Ammodramus savannarum)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mammals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western red bat (Lasiurus blossevillii)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pale big-eared bat (Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western mastiff bat (Eumops perotis californicus)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big free-tailed bat (Nyctinimops macrotis)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallid bat (Antrozous pallidus pacificus)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (Lepus californicus bennettii)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American badger (Taxidea taxus neglecta)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>CSC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Including 200-foot buffer around project site

Many other sensitive bird species potentially use the project site for foraging (see Table 4.3-3), but are not expected to nest thereon. The yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) [CSC] and the yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) [CSC] may temporarily forage in the disturbed coyote brush scrub during migration, as each is known to utilize scrub habitats and is known to

---

4 As reported in CDFG’s Special Animals List (July, 2009).
occur within the Goleta Slough Ecosystem and nearby Tecolotito Creek. The northern harrier (\textit{Circus cyaneus}) [CSC] is a fairly common visitant to the Goleta Slough and has been observed roosting at the Los Carneros Wetland, which is a few hundred feet to the south of the project site. This species as well as migrants such as the Vaux’s swift (\textit{Chaetura vauxii}) [CSC] and black swift (\textit{Cypseloides niger}) [CSC] may potentially forage over the project site when present in the area. The burrowing owl (\textit{Athene cunicularia}) [CSC] and loggerhead shrike (\textit{Lanius ludovicianus ludovicianus}) [CSC] are also known from the Goleta Slough and have been observed in the vicinity of the project site to the west of Los Carneros Road.

As many as five species of bats and two other species of mammals listed as California Species of Special Concern may occur at the project site. The bat species would only be expected to aerially forage occasionally over the site, and would not be expected to roost, hibernate, or reproduce on the site. The badger (\textit{Taxidea taxus}) and black-tailed jackrabbit (\textit{Lepus californicus bennettii}) could potentially reach the project site from natural areas to the north by way of the Los Carneros Creek riparian corridor; although, given the disturbed condition of the project site and vicinity, as well as its small size, any occurrence of badgers would likely be transient.

Sensitive species listed in Table 4.3-3 as potentially occurring at the project site may also utilize the northern stockpile area, but with much lower probability and frequency due to the general lack of cover and limited foraging opportunities. The yellow-breasted chat and the yellow warbler are exceptions, however, as these two species are not considered to have any potential to occur at the northern stockpile.

\textbf{Raptor Habitat}

The City and surrounding area are inhabited by several species of migratory and resident raptors. Three sensitive raptors species are known to occur or have potential to occur at the project site, including the white-tailed kite, northern harrier, and burrowing owl.

\textbf{White-tailed kite (\textit{Elanus leucurus}) [CFP]}

The white-tailed kite is a regular breeder and year-round resident in the Goleta area. Kites have been observed foraging over the project site. The white-tailed kite inhabits low elevation, open grasslands, savannah-like habitats, agricultural areas, wetlands, and oak woodlands.\textsuperscript{5} They nest in trees, usually with a dense canopy, but nest trees can vary from single, isolated trees to trees within large woodlands. Along the South Coast, preferred nest trees include (in order of frequency used): oaks, pines, Monterey cypress, eucalyptus, and willows.\textsuperscript{6} In the Goleta area, nest sites are always adjacent to open space areas with a stable prey base, and kites show long-term fidelity to sites with good foraging opportunities.\textsuperscript{7} A variety of foraging habitat types are used, but those that support larger and more accessible prey populations are more suitable. Diurnally active rodents, primarily meadow vole (\textit{Microtus californicus}), but also house mouse (\textit{Mus musculus}) and western harvest mouse (\textit{Reithrodontomys megalotis}) are the kite’s principal dietary components.


\textsuperscript{6} Holmgren, M. A. 2000. White-tailed Kites Near Orcutt in September 1999 and The Protection Environment for Kites in Santa Barbara County, California.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
White-tailed kite territory size is a function of prey and competitor abundance. Reported average territory sizes include 4 to 53 acres, 8 47 to 130 acres, 9 and 42 to 297 acres 10.

Northern harrier (Circus cyaneus) [CSC]
The northern harrier occurs as a winter visitor in Santa Barbara County. 11 The species appears to be nomadic, ranging widely, both within the breeding season and across years. 12 Harriers have been observed foraging in grassland and open scrub habitats in the Goleta area in the winter. It is a fairly common visitant to the Goleta Slough and has been observed roosting at the Los Carneros Wetland, which is a few hundred feet to the south of the project site. Northern harriers forage in a variety of open habitats that provide adequate vegetative cover, an abundance of suitable prey, and scattered hunting, plucking, and lookout perches such as shrubs or fence posts. Harriers feed on a broad variety of small- to medium- sized vertebrates, primarily rodents and passerines. Land use conversion to unsuitable foraging habitat can result in local extirpation, and activities that degrade habitat can reduce prey populations thereby reducing foraging habitat suitability for this species.

Burrowing owl (Athene cunicularia) [CSC]
The burrowing owl was formerly bred along the South Coast and in western Santa Barbara County, but its presence along the South Coast and western portions of Santa Barbara County is now restricted to late fall and winter transients from more interior portions of California. 11 It is found throughout much of California in open habitat, including annual and perennial grasslands, deserts, and arid scrublands. The burrowing owl nests in burrows typically dug by fossorial mammals such as badgers and ground squirrels. Man-made structures, such as cement culverts and debris piles, may also be used. Recent sightings of wintering burrowing owls along the South Coast include rocky grassland northeast of Foothill Road and Highway 154, West Campus in 1998 and other University lands north of the Coal Oil Point Reserve in 2001. The latter record was of a single individual observed within a burrow in heavily disturbed area in the southern portion of the University-owned South Parcel, several hundred feet northwest of Devereux Slough in winter, 2001. A burrowing owl was observed on November 7, 2006 by Goleta staff personnel Patricia Miller and Laura Volk along the railroad berm to the north of the Village at Los Carneros development site west of Los Carneros Road.

Several other raptors that do not meet the aforementioned definition as “sensitive” were observed or have potential to occur at the site with varying probability, including the American kestrel (Falco sparverius), barn owl (Tyto alba), Cooper’s Hawk (Accipiter cooperii), great horned owl (Bubo virginianus), merlin (Falco columbarius), prairie falcon (Falco mexicanus), red-shouldered hawk (Buteo lineatus), red-tailed hawk (Buteo jamaicensis), sharp-shinned hawk (Accipiter striatus), and turkey vulture (Cathartes aura). The following discussion of raptor habitat focuses considerably on the sensitive white-tailed kite, as the local population of white-

---

8 Dunk, J. R. and R. J. Cooper. 1994. Territory size regulation in Black-shouldered Kites. Auk 111: 588-595. (Note: the white-tailed kite was formerly named black-shouldered kite.)
12 Shuford, W. D., and Gardali, T., editors. 2008. California Bird Species of Special Concern: A ranked assessment of species, subspecies, and distinct populations of birds of immediate conservation concern in California. Studies of Western Birds 1. Western Field Ornithologists, Camarillo, California, and California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento.
tailed kites has been well studied and it is the only sensitive raptor that occurs at the project site and also breeds in the Goleta area.

**Raptor Nesting and Roosting Habitat**

The General Plan extends protection to raptor nesting and roosting sites, by designating nesting and roosting sites as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA). The City requires that new development be setback at least 100 feet from active and historical raptor nests that qualify as ESHA, when feasible. Nesting raptors are also protected by Fish and Game Code Sections 3503 and 3503.5, as well as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Raptor nests were not observed during the biological survey in July 2010, and the City General Plan does not have a record of a historical raptor nest at or adjacent to the project site. Sensitive and non-sensitive raptors do not have potential to nest at the project site due to lack of suitable nesting habitat and the proximity of the site to existing development, noise, and human activities, or because the Goleta area is outside of the species current breeding range. The project site also lacks habitat for communal roosts of turkey vultures or white-tailed kites. The stand of eucalyptus located to the north of the northern stockpile area and the UPRR could be used by nesting raptors, although this is considered unlikely due to the proximity of the trees to Los Carneros Road and the 101 Freeway and, therefore, considerable traffic and noise.

White-tailed kites have previously roosted and nested at the Los Carneros wetland. Site fidelity that suggested nesting was observed in 1990. White-tailed kite nesting has not been documented at the Los Carneros wetland since 1990. However, presence/absence data for nesting kites is lacking for the wetland for most years between 1990 and the present. This historical nest site is several hundred feet to the south of the project site and, therefore, well outside of the 100-foot buffer required between new development and historical nest sites of sensitive (special-status) raptors by the City General Plan.

White-tailed kite nest sites can be vacated for a period of years and returned to later for nesting. The possibility of kites returning to roost or nest at the Los Carneros wetlands cannot be discounted, although it is less likely now that the wetlands are nearly surrounded by residential development and roads. In the Goleta area, kite nest sites have always been adjacent to open space areas with a stable prey base. Historical nest sites in the Goleta area have been abandoned when adjacent foraging areas have been compromised. Selected important nesting areas for the white-tailed kite in the Goleta area include Ellwood Mesa, Lake Los Carneros County Park, Coal Oil Point Reserve and nearby undeveloped areas, More Mesa, the East Storke Campus Wetland, and the Goleta Slough.

White-tailed kites gather in communal roosts during the non-breeding season. Roost aggregations of several to 45 individuals were recorded during regular monitoring of several roost sites in Goleta from November 1986 to May 2000. Historically, More Mesa has been the most important communal roosting site in the Santa Barbara area, which is approximately three miles from the project site. The locations of other white-tailed kite roosting sites were not obtained and therefore are not included herein. Turkey vulture communal roosts at Ellwood

---

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
North and Ellwood West on Ellwood Mesa are documented in the Draft Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan (March 2004). The northern harrier has also roosted at the Los Carneros wetland.  

Raptor Foraging Habitat

General Plan Policy CE 8.2 requires that all development be located, designed, constructed, and managed to avoid disturbance or adverse impacts to sensitive (special-status) species and their habitats, including nesting, rearing, roosting, foraging, and other elements of required habitats. The City of Goleta Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual instructs that a project may result in a significant impact if it substantially fragments, eliminates, or otherwise disrupts foraging areas and/or access to food resources.

The coyote brush scrub and non-native habitats at the project site provide foraging opportunities for potentially occurring species of raptors, which vary in their probability and frequency of occurrence. The raptor foraging habitat at the project site is contiguous with additional foraging habitat at Willow Springs North to the north and west.

The project site is estimated to be of moderate value to foraging raptors. Two important factors influencing habitat quality for foraging are prey density, as well as habitat features affecting prey accessibility, such as suitable perches. A number of prey species including Botta’s pocket gophers, California ground squirrels, brush rabbits, various passerines, and western fence lizards, as well as several rodent burrows were observed during the biological survey of the site in July 2010. It seems fair to assume that the presence of raptors foraging over the site, which have been casually observed during several site visits conducted by various personnel during preparation of this EIR, indicates prey availability and foraging value.

The project site itself does not contain notable perching habitat for foraging raptors. There are a few medium-sized trees, fences, and tall posts adjacent to the project site, as well as tall eucalyptus trees to the north of the northern stockpile area, which could serve as perches for foraging raptors. These potential perches are generally close to existing development or the traffic and noise of the 101 Freeway.

The project site is connected to the Los Carneros wetland, the Goleta Slough, Los Carneros Creek, and natural habitats to the north of the 101 Freeway (See Wildlife Movement, below). These habitat connections are expected to have positive effects on the foraging value of the site, as they allow for dispersal of small mammals and other prey species to repopulate the site following population declines. Prey density is in part dependent upon the ability of prey populations to rebound following cyclical declines caused by over-exploitation by predators or catastrophes, such as drought or disease. Habitat connectivity is an important factor affecting the ability of prey populations to rebound. Corridors and connections among habitat areas indirectly support kites as well as other birds-of-prey by maintaining their prey base.

White-tailed kites are known to forage up to tens of kilometers from communal roost sites, so when prey reductions occur at the local level, kites have a sufficiently large daily range that they

---

can find other areas to hunt. When collapse of prey populations occurs at the regional scale, kites can vacate an area until prey populations rebuild at which time kites gradually reoccupy suitable foraging areas, nest sites, and roost locations. The local population of white-tailed kites has fluctuated dramatically presumably in response to prey abundance. Kites are a nomadic species able to adopt new home bases and vacate long-used areas quite abruptly. The presence and abundance of white-tailed kites is strongly correlated with the presence of meadow voles. Meadow voles were not observed but can be expected to occur at the project site.

As discussed previously, white-tailed kites formerly nested at the Los Carneros wetland. If kites were to return to nest at the Los Carneros wetland, the foraging habitat at the project site would become of greater importance, as kites seldom forage more than 0.5 miles from the nest when breeding. Henry (1983) found the mean breeding home range to be as low as 0.2 mi. The project site is within a 0.2-mile radius of the wetland, and much of the area within a 0.5-mile radius of the wetland is currently developed and would be further developed under the project. With development of the project, kites nesting at the Los Carneros wetland would be able to forage within a 0.5-mile radius of the wetland at the Willow Springs North property, at areas within the Goleta Slough Ecosystem south of Hollister Road, and undeveloped fields and native habitats just north of the 101 Freeway.

The project site is also within a 0.5-mile radius of the natural habitats at Lake Los Carneros County Park, where nesting kites or kites displaying persistent territoriality have been observed in most years since year 1999. Although the project site is within a 0.5-mile radius of this area, the foraging habitats at the County Park and adjacent undeveloped fields to the north of the 101 Freeway are probably of sufficient size and quality to support successful kite breeding. The project site is outside of the anticipated foraging range of nesting white-tailed kites at other known key nesting areas in the Goleta area.

Although the project site is estimated to be of moderate value to foraging raptors, it is of lesser regional importance given its small size, fragmented condition, proximity to urban development, and low native habitat diversity. The project site is part of a fragmented area of disturbed habitat that is surrounded by development and roads. The Goleta area contains a number of other natural areas that provide comparatively larger expanses and higher value raptor habitat, as evidenced by the documented use and repeated nesting of various species of raptors in these areas. For example, quality raptor habitat exists at Ellwood Mesa, Los Carneros Lake County Park, the Goleta Slough, Coal Oil Point Reserve and vicinity, and the Santa Ynez foothills.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
29 For more information on raptor use of areas in the City of Goleta and nearby open space areas, see the City of Goleta General Plan Conservation Element; Draft Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan, December 1997; Draft Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan, March 2004; Comstock Homes Development and Ellwood Mesa Open Space Plan EIR; Ocean Meadows Residences and Open Space Plan EIR; and the University of California, Santa Barbara Long Range Development Plan EIR.
Raptors generally require large home ranges, and individual foraging territories are often measured in terms of tens of acres to square miles. During breeding, demand for prey increases and additional habitat must be available for young birds to disperse from nesting locations and establish new territories. Urban development and other land-use conversion have resulted in the removal of substantial amounts of raptor foraging habitat in the Goleta area. Loss of foraging habitat reduces prey abundance and availability, which reduces and limits the number of raptors a given area can support. In general, smaller populations are less resilient to environmental stress, e.g. drought, disease, and fluctuations in prey availability.

**Wildlife Movement**

Wildlife need to access essential habitat for water, foraging, breeding, and cover. Examples of barriers or impediments to movement include housing and other urban development, roads, fencing, unsuitable habitat, or open areas with little vegetative cover.

The term wildlife movement corridor is used to describe physical connections that allow wildlife to move between patches of suitable habitat in both undisturbed landscapes, as well as environments fragmented by urban development. Large areas of suitable habitat and corridors between these areas are necessary to maintain healthy ecological and evolutionary processes. For example, wildlife movement corridors are necessary for dispersal and migration, to ensure the mixing of genes between populations, and so wildlife can respond and adapt to environmental stress.

The Goleta Slough is nearly isolated from the large core habitats of the Santa Ynez Mountains by urban development. Maintaining and improving existing linkages for wildlife movement between the Goleta Slough Ecosystem and adjacent ecosystems are policy objectives of the GSEMP (1997). The remaining opportunities for overland wildlife movement between the Goleta Slough and the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains consist of riparian corridors associated with creeks that drain to the Slough, including Tecolotito (Glen Annie), Los Carneros, San Pedro, Las Vegas, San Jose and Marie Ignacio Creeks. The relative value of each of these riparian corridors for movement, as well as extent of any impediments or barriers, was not thoroughly investigated for this EIR. However, it is assumed that each of these creeks offers a potential corridor between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Slough.

One of these creeks, perennial Los Carneros Creek, flows near to the project site. Los Carneros Creek flows beneath the 101 Freeway in a culvert large enough to support the movement of large mammals (Figure 4.3-2). After passing beneath the 101 Freeway, realigned Los Carneros Creek turns and flows east just north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks before turning and flowing to the south for approximately 0.40 miles to Hollister Avenue in an exposed concrete-lined channel through the industrial area to the east of the project site. Los Carneros Creek then passes under Hollister Avenue in a culvert also capable of supporting the movement of large mammals, including deer, bear, and mountain lion, to the open space of the Goleta Slough Ecosystem. North of the 101 Freeway, Los Carneros Creek passes from the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains through naturally vegetated, agricultural or undeveloped lands. Based on land uses surrounding the creeks and associated riparian areas, it appears that Los Carneros Creek, as well as Glen Annie (Tecolotito) Creek, offer better opportunities for movement compared to other creeks draining to the Slough, since each passes through relatively little urban development.
The project site and the Willow Springs North property represent an alternative to movement along the approximately 0.40-mile exposed concrete-lined reach of Los Carneros Creek to the east of the site. Wildlife utilizing the Willow Springs North property could pass from the Los Carneros Creek culvert beneath the 101 Freeway to the Goleta Slough, via disturbed undeveloped habitats and the Los Carneros Wetland (See the earlier Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas heading). This wildlife movement corridor is shown on Figure 4.3-3. This option is not without impediments, as portions of the area are graded or contain sparse vegetative cover, and wildlife must cross Camino Vista, a two-lane residential road. However, these are not substantial barriers for some species. Furthermore, the culvert beneath Hollister Avenue between the Los Carneros Wetland and the Goleta Slough is too small to allow passage of large and perhaps some medium-sized mammals. It would be necessary for larger species to cross Hollister Avenue. Nevertheless, this corridor is the more suitable option for smaller species, as compared to the exposed concrete-lined reach of Los Carneros Creek to the east. The concrete-lined reach lacks any cover or foraging habitat for a long distance, leaving many animals vulnerable to predation by raptors, owls, or coyotes, for example. Many animals would not pass through this area due to these habitat conditions. Also, although during EnviCom's site investigation in July 2010, flows within the concrete channel of Los Carneros Creek were low enough to allow for passage of terrestrial species, this would presumably not be the case at all times, particularly during winter and spring months when the depth and velocity of flows may render the channel impassible.

Where movement has been substantially constrained by encroaching development, it is necessary to maintain corridors, despite existing impediments within them, in order to preserve what remains as opportunities for movement. Wildlife movement corridors with impediments can be improved by establishing or restoring habitat, increasing the size of culverts, and installing fencing to reduce the potential for human and wildlife encounters. The GSEMP includes improving existing linkages for wildlife movement between the Goleta Slough and adjacent ecosystems as a policy objective.

Regulatory Setting

Federal

Endangered Species Act of 1973

The Federal Endangered Species Act and implementing regulations, Title 16 United States Code (USC) Section 1531 et seq. (16 USC 1531 et seq.), Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 17.1 et seq. (50 CFR Section 17.1 et seq.), include provisions for the protection and management of federally listed threatened or endangered plants and animals and their designated critical habitats. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires a permit to take threatened or endangered species during lawful project activities. The administering agency is the USFWS for terrestrial, avian, and most aquatic species.

---

30 According to the GSEMP, the Los Carneros Wetland was once part of the “Goleta wildlife corridor,” a continuous corridor connecting Lake Los Carneros and the Goleta Slough.
Wildlife Movement

Proposed extension of Camino Vista Rd.

Legend
- Willow Springs Project Site Boundary
- Wildlife Movement Corridor

Aerial Source: Google Earth, 2010.
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

Section 7 of Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 USC 742 et seq., 16 USC 1531 et seq., and 50 CFR 17 require consultation if any project facilities could jeopardize the continued existence of an endangered species. Applicability depends on Federal jurisdiction over some aspect of the project (e.g., dredge or fill activities in “waters of the U.S.”). The administering agency is typically the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) in coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC Sections 703-711) includes provisions for protection of migratory birds, including the non-permitted take of migratory birds, under the authority of the USFWS and CDFG.

Clean Water Act of 1977, Section 404

This section of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1251 et seq., 33 CFR Sections 320 and 323) gives the ACOE authority to regulate discharges of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands.

Clean Water Act of 1977, Section 401

This section of the Clean Water Act requires a State-issued Water Quality Certification for all projects regulated under Section 404. In California, the RWQCB issues Water Quality Certifications with jurisdiction over the project area. The RWQCB - Central Coast Region, issues Section 401 Water Quality Certifications for applicable project activities in Santa Barbara County.

State

California Endangered Species Act of 1984

The California Endangered Species Act and implementing regulations in the Fish and Game Code, Section 2050 through Section 2098, include provisions for the protection and management of plant and animals species listed as endangered or threatened, or designated as candidates for such listing. The Act includes a consultation requirement “to ensure that any action authorized by a State lead agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species…or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat essential to the continued existence of the species” (Section 2090). Plants of California declared to be endangered, threatened, or rare are listed at 14 CCR Section 670.2. Animals of California declared to be endangered or threatened are listed at 14 CCR Section 670.5. 14 CCR Section 15000 et seq. describes the types and extent of information required to evaluate the effects of a project on biological resources of a project site.

California Species Preservation Act 1970: California Fish and Game Code Sections 900 – 903

This law includes provisions for the protection and enhancement of the birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles of California, and is administered by the CDFG.
Fish and Game Code
The Fish and Game Code provides specific protection and listing for several types of biological resources, including:

- Fully-protected species.
- Streams, rivers, sloughs, and channels.
- Significant Natural Areas.
- Designated Ecological Reserves.

Fully Protected Species are listed in Section 3511 (Fully Protected birds), Section 4700 (Fully Protected mammals), Section 5050 (Fully Protected reptiles and amphibians), and Section 5515 (Fully Protected fishes). The Fish and Game Code of California prohibits the taking of species designated as Fully Protected.

The Fish and Game Code Section 1600 requires a Streambed Alteration Agreement for any activity that may alter the bed and/or bank of a stream, river, or channel. Typical activities that require a Streambed Alteration Agreement include excavation or fill placed within a channel, vegetation clearing, structures for diversion of water, installation of culverts and bridge supports, cofferdams for construction dewatering, and bank reinforcement.

The Fish and Game Code Section 1930 designates Significant Natural Areas. These areas include refuges, natural sloughs, riparian areas, and vernal pools and significant wildlife habitats. An inventory of Significant Natural Areas is maintained by the CDFG Natural Heritage Division and is part of the NDDB. Section 1580 of the Fish and Game Code lists Designated Ecological Reserves. Designated Ecological Reserves are significant wildlife habitats to be preserved in natural condition for the general public to observe and study.

The Fish and Game Code Sections 2081(b) and (c) allow CDFG to issue an incidental take permit for a State listed threatened and endangered species only if specific criteria are met. These criteria can be found in Title 14 CCR, Sections 783.4(a) and (b). No Section 2081(b) permit may authorize the take of “fully protected” species and “specified birds.” If a project is planned in an area where a species or specified bird occurs, an applicant must design the project to avoid all take; the CDFG cannot provide take authorization under this act.

The Fish and Game Code Section 3503 specifies it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code. Section 3503.5 specifies it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey), to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest of any such bird, except as otherwise provided by this code.

CEQA, Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq. and CEQA Guidelines
The CEQA Guidelines provide a framework for the analysis of impacts to biological resources. The administering agency is the CEQA Lead Agency, which, in this case is the City of Goleta.
Native Plant Protection Act of 1977

The Native Plant Protection Act of 1977 and implementing regulations in Section 1900 et seq. of the Fish and Game Code designates rare and endangered plants and provides specific protection measures for identified populations. It is administered by the CDFG.

Public Resources Code Sections 25500 & 25527

These code sections prohibit the siting of development in certain areas of critical concern for biological resources, such as ecological preserves, wildlife refuges, estuaries, and unique or irreplaceable wildlife habitats of scientific or educational value. If there is no alternative, strict criteria are applied under the authority of the CDFG.

Local

City of Goleta General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan (General Plan)

The General Plan includes policies that protect and preserve biological resources within the City by designating specific resources and areas as protected, including Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA), restricting activities and uses in protected areas, providing for the management of the resources on City lands, specifying impact avoidance and mitigation requirements for types of activities and by type of biological resource, and providing guidance for development and conservation decisions over the long-term. The policies anticipate the potential impacts to biological resources from the land uses and activities that will occur under the General Plan and serve to avoid, reduce, and/or mitigate those impacts. The key policies regarding biological resources are in the Conservation, Open Space, and Land Use Elements.

Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan (GSEMP)

The Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan provides a comprehensive framework for ecosystem management and impact mitigation within the Goleta Slough Ecosystem. The policies of the Management Plan are advisory and are no more restrictive than the policies of the regulatory agencies that retain control over the Ecosystem. The Plan strives to balance protecting and enhancing wetland habitats while accommodating existing land uses. It also recognizes the need to balance the existing diversity of land uses with protection and enhancement of natural and human values that are provided within the Ecosystem. The Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Area is comprised of all areas currently or historically within the tidally influenced basin of the Goleta Slough, as well as contiguous freshwater wetland habitats and upland habitats.

While the project site apparently lies outside of the GSEMP boundary, the GSEMP is included herein because of the project’s potential to result in indirect impacts on the Goleta Slough Ecosystem.

City of Santa Barbara’s Airport and Goleta Slough Coastal Plan

While the project is outside the boundaries of the City of Santa Barbara’s Airport and Goleta Slough Coastal Plan, this plan includes policies which serve to protect the biological functions of the slough, including but not limited to minimizing sedimentation and pollutants from non-point sources which are conveyed to the Goleta Slough in stormwater runoff.
4.3.2 Thresholds of Significance

State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G

In accordance with Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, the project would have a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

b. Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;

c. Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means;

d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites;

e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; or

f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

City of Goleta Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual

The City of Goleta's Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual defines additional thresholds of significance, as described below.

Types of Impacts to Biological Resources

Disturbances to habitats or species may be significant, based on substantial evidence in the record, if they substantially impact significant resources in the following ways:

g. Substantially reduce or eliminate species diversity or abundance.

h. Substantially reduce or eliminate quantity or quality of nesting areas.

i. Substantially limit reproductive capacity through loss of individuals or habitat.

j. Substantially fragment, eliminate, or otherwise disrupt foraging areas and/or access to food resources.

k. Substantially limit or fragment range and movement (geographic distribution of animals and/or seed dispersal routes).

l. Substantially interfere with natural processes, such as fire or flooding, upon which the habitat depends.
Less Than Significant Impacts
The Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual provides examples of areas in the City where impacts to habitat are presumed to be less than significant, including:

- Small acreages of non-native grassland if wildlife values are low.
- Individuals or stands of non-native trees if not used by important animal species such as raptors or monarch butterflies.
- Areas of historical disturbance such as intensive agriculture.
- Small pockets of habitats already significantly fragmented or isolated, and disturbed or degraded.
- Areas of primarily ruderal species resulting from pre-existing man-made disturbance.

4.3.3 Project Impacts
The project grading limits include the residential development area, the Camino Vista Road right-of-way, a 10-foot wide fill area along the north boundary of the Camino Vista right-of-way, and the northern stockpile located on the Willow Springs North property. The project would result in the permanent or temporary removal of vegetation within these areas. The project limits of disturbance also include areas subject to fuel modification within 100 feet of structures. The limits of each of these boundaries are shown on Figure 4.3-1.

Vegetation and Sensitive Plant Communities
Vegetation at the project site consists of coyote brush scrub or ruderal/disturbed areas that consist overwhelmingly of non-native grasses and forbs. Evidence demonstrating that the coyote brush scrub at the site does not meet the definition of an ESHA is provided above in Existing Conditions. The northern stockpile area is either barren or sparsely vegetated with weeds or consists of patches of vegetation dominated by non-native species. No plant communities within the project site, the northern stockpile area, the 10-foot buffer of the Camino Vista right-of-way, or areas potentially subject to fuel modification activities during the project operational phase, are considered to be sensitive. Therefore, the project would not result in impacts to vegetation and sensitive plant communities.

Sensitive Plant Species
Sensitive plant species were not observed during biological surveys in February 2008 or July 2010. Sensitive plant species with potential to occur have either been verified as absent by surveys or are presumed absent within the project limits of disturbance due to competition from invasive species, the long history of agricultural use, and because the area was mass graded on at least two occasions since 1986. Therefore, the project would not result in impacts to sensitive plant species.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA) (Bio 1 and Bio 2)

---

31 Addresses Thresholds “a”, “b”, “g”, “i”, “k”
32 Addresses Thresholds “a”, “b”, “g”, and “i”
33 Addresses Thresholds “a”–“d”, “e”–“g”, and “j”, “l”
4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Development of the project would remove existing vegetation and increase the amount of impervious surfaces at the project site, which would increase the quantity and affect the quality of stormwater runoff reaching downstream waterbodies, including the Los Carneros Wetland, Los Carneros Creek, Tecolotito Creek, and the Goleta Slough. Pollutants (e.g. sediment, hydrocarbons, heavy metals, herbicides, and fertilizers) could be transported in stormwater runoff as a result of temporary construction activities and routine human activities during the operational phase of the project. Pollutants from the project could degrade water and soil quality in sensitive wetland, riparian and aquatic habitats and natural communities (e.g. the Los Carneros Wetland and the Goleta Slough), as well as indirectly impact sensitive wildlife and vascular plant species dependent upon these habitat areas. The Los Carneros Wetland is designated an ESHA by the City, and the Goleta Slough is designated ESHA by the City of Santa Barbara and the County of Santa Barbara.

The project would convey all stormwater from within the site through storm drains that would connect to the existing storm drains within Willow Springs I, which ultimately drain to the Los Carneros Wetland, located southwest of the Willow Springs I residential units. The project includes the installation of a low-flow bio-swale along the eastern boundary of the site to cleanse surface runoff from the parking lot before it enters the storm drain system in Willow Springs I. The bio-swale would be planted with Carex and deer grass. The Willow Springs I project site includes landscaped bio-filter areas that would help to cleanse surface runoff. Stormwater flows from the project must meet appropriate water quality standards through implementation of Best Management Practices to control surface water runoff quality. The City’s Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP), approved through the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) in compliance with the 1972 Clean Water Act, establishes measures and practices to reduce the discharge of pollutants and to protect downstream water quality. Compliance with the City SWMP with respect to construction period discharges and long-term operational discharges would be required. As required by the SWMP, water quality standards measures must be achieved implemented prior to the surface runoff reaching the Los Carneros Wetland. Until the project drainage plans, SWPPP and SQUIMP have demonstrated compliance with the SWMP, impacts are considered potentially significant (Impact Bio 1).

Invasive exotic species introduced as landscaping could be dispersed by stormwater, wind, or wildlife, or by various other means to the Los Carneros Wetland, the Goleta Slough, and other natural areas. Invasive species could outcompete native plants and disrupt normal ecological processes, reducing biological diversity and potentially threatening the quality of natural habitats.

The Conceptual Landscape Plan for the project was reviewed for potential impacts to biological resources, such as the use of invasive plant species. This was accomplished by comparison of species included in the Plan with species listed by the California Invasive Plant Inventory (2006) and Invasive Plant Inventory updates produced by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC), an invasive plant list compiled by the CNPS in 1993, which is included in the Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan, as well as additional sources and personal experience. The Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan also contains the list Exotic Pest Plants of Greatest Ecological Concern in California, as of August 1996. However, since the most current California Invasive Plant Inventory updates this list, it was not considered in the analysis.

The Conceptual Landscape Plan includes species that could be considered invasive. The Plan proposes to install Boston Ivy (Parthenocissus tricuspidata), which is an invasive plant included
on the above-mentioned CNPS list. The CNPS list of invasive plants includes the genera Cotoneaster and Pittosporum, but does not list particular species within these genera. The Conceptual Landscape Plan contains three species of Pittosporum and one species of Cotoneaster, but none of these species are considered invasive. The Conceptual Landscape Plan also includes Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica), an invasive species, and an unspecified plant within the genus Cistis. Some species of Cistis are considered invasive. Introduction of invasive, non-native plant species would be a potentially significant impact (Impact Bio 2).

**Sensitive Wildlife Species**

Sensitive wildlife species with potential to occur at the project site are limited to some species of birds and mammals listed as California Fully Protected (CFP) or Species of Special Concern (CSC) by the State of California. A list of these species is provided in Table 4.3-3. Sensitive species may forage at the project site, but are not expected to reproduce thereon. Sensitive wildlife species with potential to occur would be capable of escaping harm during vegetation removal and grading/construction activities. Therefore, impacts to sensitive wildlife species are less than significant.

**Nesting Birds (BIO 3)**

Grading and vegetation removal during the construction phase and during fuel modification activities during the operational phase, if conducted during the nesting bird season (February 1 to August 31) would have the potential to result in the damage or loss of shrubs that could contain active bird nests. Also, construction activities would have the potential to disturb nesting birds within the vicinity of the project site. Project activities that result in the loss of bird nests, eggs, and young, would be in violation of one or more of California Fish and Game Code sections 3503 (any bird nest), 3503.5 (birds-of-prey), or 3511 (Fully Protected birds). In addition, removal or destruction of one or more active nests of any other birds listed by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA), whether nest damage was due to tree removal or to other construction activities, would be considered a violation of the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code Section 3503, and therefore would be a significant impact. Construction of the project would result in a potentially significant impact (Impact Bio 3).

**Raptor Habitat**

There are no historical or active raptor nests or communal roosts at the project site or within 100 feet of the project site. No sensitive or non-sensitive raptors have potential to nest at the project site due to lack of suitable nesting habitat and proximity to development, noise, and human activities, or because the project site is outside of the species current breeding range. The project site also lacks habitat for turkey vulture or white-tailed kite communal roosts. Therefore, development of the project would not substantially reduce or eliminate quantity or quality of raptor nesting or communal roosting areas.

On an incremental basis, the project would result in the permanent loss of approximately 6.0 acres of suitable foraging habitat for raptors. The foraging habitat at the project site is not essential for the successful breeding of raptors nesting in the Goleta area. Therefore,

---

34 Addresses Thresholds “a”, “d”, “g”, “I”
35 Addresses Thresholds “a”, “d”, “g”, “h”, “I”
36 Addresses Thresholds “a”, “d”, “g”, “h”, “I”, “k”
development of the project would not substantially limit reproductive capacity of raptors through loss of foraging habitat.

The undeveloped areas adjacent to the project site to the north and west would continue to provide moderate value foraging habitat for raptors, including for the white-tailed kite if this species were to nest at the Los Carneros wetland.

The incremental loss of 6.0 acres of suitable foraging habitat would not have a significant effect on regional raptor populations, as 6.0 acres represents a small percentage of the raptor foraging habitat in the Goleta area. Also, the project site is of lower importance to raptors when compared to the larger and more diverse natural habitats in the Goleta area. For example, suitable foraging habitat exists at Ellwood Mesa, Bishop Ranch, Los Carneros Lake, Santa Barbara Municipal Airport and Goleta Slough, and UCSB areas, as well as at additional undeveloped private lands. Raptors are mobile species with generally large home ranges that are capable of compensating for the loss of small acreages of foraging habitat in a local area by moving to other suitable foraging habitats. The sensitive white-tailed kite, for example, is known to forage up to tens of kilometers from communal roost sites, and may become nomadic in response to food shortages. Therefore, development of the project would not substantially eliminate raptor foraging areas or access of raptors to food resources. Impacts to raptors from the loss of suitable habitat are less than significant.

Wildlife Movement 37

The project would develop an area along a wildlife movement corridor identified as part of this analysis, as described above and shown in Figure 4.3-3. The removal of this habitat, along with indirect impacts on remaining undeveloped areas adjacent to the project site (such as noise, lighting, and human and pet encroachment), as well as increased traffic along Calle Koral Road and Camino Vista Road, would reduce the area available and quality of the corridor for wildlife movement. However, the project would not remove habitat within the direct path for movement or otherwise obstruct or substantially constrict the ability of wildlife to pass through the corridor to and from areas to the north and south.

The northern stockpile is also within the wildlife movement corridor. The use of the stockpile during the grading phase of the project would be temporary, would not involve barriers, and would typically not occur during nighttime hours when medium and large-sized mammals would be most active. However, as provided in Section 4.4 Cultural Resources, removal of the stockpile would require fencing on the Willow Springs North property to mitigate potential impacts to archaeological resources. Fencing would add a restrictive element to the Willow Spring North property for wildlife movement. However, this fencing would be temporary during grading. Impacts to wildlife movement are less than significant.

4.3.4 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative Effects of Degraded Stormwater on ESHAs (Bio 4) 38

The project and related projects in the Goleta area, as identified in Section 3.0, would continue the trend of converting undeveloped, pervious land to urban uses with expansion of impervious surfaces, increased runoff volumes, generation of increased oil, grease, other pollutants, and

37 Addresses Thresholds "d", "e", "f", "k"
38 Addresses Thresholds "a", "b", "c", "e", "f", "l"
transport of invasive ornamental plant species in stormwater runoff draining to the Goleta Slough. The project, when considered with other cumulative development within the watersheds of the Los Carneros Wetland and the Goleta Slough would potentially result in significant cumulative impacts to ESHA creeks and wetlands due to the potential for increased degraded stormwater runoff. Prior to mitigation that would reduce the project level impacts due to degraded stormwater runoff to less than significant levels, the project’s contribution would potentially be cumulatively considerable and, therefore, potentially significant (Impact Bio 4).

**Cumulative Effects of Invasive Species on ESHAs (Bio 5)**

The project and related projects in the Goleta area, as identified in Section 3.0, would potentially result in significant cumulative impacts to ESHA creeks and wetlands due to the spread of invasive species. Prior to mitigation that would reduce project level impacts restrict the project’s use of invasive species to downstream ESHAs to less than significant levels, the project’s contribution would potentially be cumulatively considerable and, therefore, potentially significant (Impact Bio 5).

**Cumulative Loss of Raptor Habitat**

The project—six acre project site is not considered significant nesting or roosting habitat for raptors and the project’s conversion to urban development, when considered with other cumulative development in the area would not result in the incremental significant loss of suitable nesting or roosting habitat for raptors. Therefore, the project would not contribute to a cumulative impact to raptor nesting or roosting habitat. The project and several related projects in the Goleta area would result in the loss of suitable foraging habitat for raptors, including but not limited to non-native grassland, open scrubland, and disturbed/ruderal fields. The project would not result in a cumulative impact to raptor foraging areas or access to food resources, as the foraging habitat at the project site is of lesser importance to raptors at a regional scale due to its small size, fragmented condition, and proximity to existing development; the foraging habitat at the site is not essential to successful nesting of raptors in the Goleta area; suitable foraging habitat exists at several other locations in the area, such as Ellwood Mesa, Bishop Ranch, Los Carneros Lake, Santa Barbara Municipal Airport and Goleta Slough, and UCSB areas, as well as additional undeveloped private lands; and, raptors are mobile species capable of compensating for the loss of small acreages of suitable foraging habitat in a local area by finding and utilizing other suitable habitats. Approximately one-third of the project site itself was recently inaccessible to raptors for foraging for several years when stockpiled soils in this area were covered in plastic sheeting. The project’s contribution (6.0 acres would be permanently removed by development of the project) to the loss of raptor habitat is not cumulatively considerable and is therefore less than significant.

**4.3.5 Mitigation Measures**

**Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BIO-1</th>
<th>Impact BIO-1 is mitigated by water quality mitigation measures included in Section 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIO-2</td>
<td>Impact BIO-2 is mitigated by measure AES 1-9, which is found in Section 4.1: Aesthetics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 Addresses Thresholds "a", "b", "c", "f", "g", "k"
40 Addresses Thresholds "a", "d", "j", "k"
Nesting Birds

BIO-3  No earlier than 14 days prior to construction or site preparation activities that would occur during the nesting/breeding season of native bird species potentially nesting on the site (typically February 1 through August 31), a field survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to determine if active nests of any bird species protected by the state or federal Endangered Species Acts, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and/or the California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3503.5, or 3511 are present in the construction zone or within 500 feet of the construction zone. If active nests are found within the survey area, construction activities within the 500-foot radius shall stop until consultation with the City, County, CDFG, and USFWS (when applicable, i.e. if the nesting birds are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act), is conducted and an appropriate setback can be established. A fence barrier shall be erected around the buffer and clearing and construction within the fenced area shall be postponed or halted, at the discretion of a biological monitor, until the nest is vacated and juveniles have fledged, as determined by the biologist, and there is no evidence of a second attempt at nesting.

Plan Requirement:  Grading Plans shall include the notes specifying the requirement for a biological field survey for nesting birds. All plans shall be revised, as necessary, to reflect setbacks and barrier fence details used to establish sensitive biological areas.

Timing:  A qualified biologist shall conduct a field survey no earlier than 14 days prior to construction or site preparation activities. The biologist report shall be submitted to the Planning and Environmental Services Department for review prior to issuance of any LUP for site preparation or grading.

Monitoring:  Planning and Environmental Services Department shall review any biological reports in consultation with resource/trustee agencies, as needed, such as the USFWS and CDFG. If deemed necessary by the City, monitoring shall be conducted and setbacks shall be maintained throughout the construction period.

Cumulative Effects of Degraded Stormwater on ESHAs (Bio 4)

BIO-4  Impact BIO-4 is mitigated by water quality mitigation measures included in Section 4.8 Hydrology and Water Quality.

Cumulative Effects of Invasive Species on ESHAs (Bio 5)

BIO-5  Impact BIO-5 is mitigated by mitigation measure BIO-2.

4.3.6 Residual Impacts

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, the project’s significant impacts on biological resources, on a project level and as contributions to cumulative impacts, would be reduced to less than significant (Class II). All other impacts would remain less than significant.