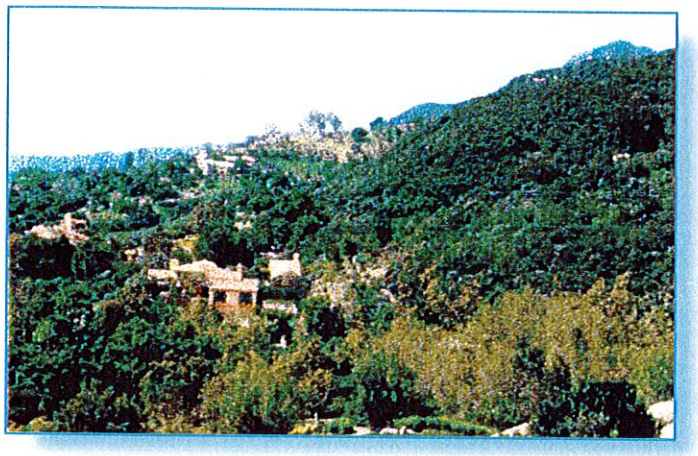
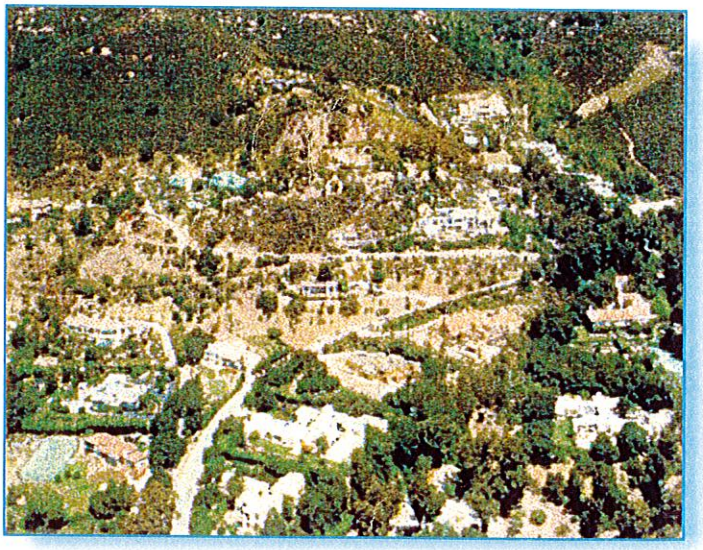
Final
Environmental Impact Report

Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan

SCH# 2000121029





April 2002

Prepared for

Montecito Fire Protection District

Prepared by

Science Applications International Corporation

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) discusses the potential environmental consequences of the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan, a proposed plan to reduce fuel loads and flammability in heavily vegetated areas by removing and selectively eliminating dead and decadent vegetation in a mosaic manner within the Montecito Fire Protection District (MFPD). The Montecito Fire Protection District is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for preparation and approval of the proposed EIR. Consistent with the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines, and in accordance with the County of Santa Barbara CEQA Guidelines (adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1990), this EIR has been prepared to accomplish the following:

- Inform the public of the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project;
- Identify methods that can mitigate or avoid project impacts; and
- Identify alternatives to the project that can reduce significant environmental impacts.

While CEQA requires that major consideration be given to avoiding environmental impacts, the lead agency and other responsible agencies (agencies that have discretionary approval or permitting authority over the proposed project) must balance adverse environmental effects against other public objectives, including economic and social goals, in determining whether and in what manner a project should be approved.

This EIR evaluates impacts resulting from the proposed Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan on the following environmental resources:

- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geological Resources
- Visual Resources

Other less complex issues are assessed in section 4.6 of the EIR. These include water resources/flooding, transportation/circulation, air quality, historic resources, noise, land use, public facilities, energy, fire protection, recreation, housing, and risk of upset/hazardous materials.

A discussion of each resource is provided in Chapter 4.0 in sections that are organized as follows. The *Existing Setting* describes the existing physical conditions for each environmental resource investigated in the EIR. This subsection provides the context for assessing potential environmental impacts resulting from implementation (buildout) of the proposed project. Environmental resource *Thresholds of Significance* is listed as separate subsections and are used to evaluate the degree of significance of each impact. These criteria include the adopted County thresholds listed in *Environmental Thresholds of Significance* (Santa Barbara County Planning & Development 1995). The *Project Impacts* discussion describes potential consequences to each

resource that would result from Plan buildout. The *Cumulative Impacts* discussion describes potential impacts from project buildout in combination with development of reasonably foreseeable (proposed and approved, but not built) projects listed in Chapter 3.0.

The following categories for impact significance are used in this analysis:

- *Class I:* Significant adverse impacts that cannot be feasibly mitigated or avoided. If the project is approved, decisionmakers are required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations pursuant to CEQA Section 15093, explaining why project benefits outweigh the damage caused by these significant environmental impacts.

- *Class II:* Significant adverse impacts that can be feasibly mitigated or avoided. If the project is approved, decisionmakers are required to make findings pursuant CEQA Section 15091, that impacts have been mitigated to the maximum extent feasible by implementation of mitigations. (This is also required for Class I impacts.)

- *Class III:* Adverse impacts that are less than significant. These impacts do not require that findings be made.

- *Class IV:* Beneficial impacts.

Environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project are summarized in Table 1-1 at the end of this section. The cumulative impacts resulting from the proposed project in combination with other reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity are summarized in Chapter 3.0. Each section in Chapter 4.0 also discusses measures to potentially minimize project impacts and the residual impacts after application of mitigation measures.

Proposed development within the Montecito Planning Area must demonstrate consistency with all applicable Comprehensive Plan policies. Development that is found to be inconsistent with applicable policies would not be approved. However, a project may be found consistent with County policies and approved even if it would result in significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. In such a case, a Statement of Overriding Consideration must be issued by the lead agency explaining why the project's benefits outweigh its significant, unavoidably adverse impacts and why it should be approved.

As required by CEQA Section 15126.6, alternatives to the proposed project are evaluated in this EIR. In Chapter 6.0, a comparison is made between the potential impacts of the proposed project and project alternatives.

In compliance with Public Resources Code 21081.6, lead agencies approving projects such as the Montecito Fire Protection District that have the potential to cause significant environmental impacts must adopt a reporting and monitoring program for the adopted or required measures that will mitigate or avoid the significant effects. The Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Plan (MMRP) for the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan consists of a complete list of proposed mitigation measures and a table indicating the parties responsible for implementation and monitoring of these mitigation measures. The MMRP will be incorporated into the Final EIR.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 1 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class I - Significant, Unavoidable Impacts			
None			
Class II – Significant but Mitigable Impacts			
Biological Resources	Vegetation removal would potentially affect migratory bird and wildlife habitats.	**BIO-1:** Practice selective fuel management to minimize removal or clearing of native riparian vegetation (canopy and understory) to the extent feasible. Maintain native vegetation to the maximum extent feasible consistent with fuel modification requirements within a 50-foot buffer zone measured from the landward edge of the riparian tree canopy of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas on the major watercourses including Sycamore, Cold Springs, Hot Springs, Montecito, San Ysidro, and Romero Creeks. **BIO-2:** Avoid clearing vegetation (drop & lop, etc.) during the bird breeding and nesting season (February 1 to August 15) in key habitat areas known to support sensitive nesting bird species, unless a pre-project survey by a qualified wildlife biologist undertaken 3 days prior to the activity determines that avian species are not currently nesting there. The key habitat areas apply to the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas on the major watercourses including Sycamore, Cold Springs, Hot Springs, Montecito, San Ysidro, and Romero Creeks and tributaries with riparian habitat dominated by willows, sycamores, or alders. Maintain habitat for nesting birds by maintaining canopy cover of.	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 2 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class II – Significant but Mitigable Impacts			
Biological Resources (continued)		native shrubs and trees in treated areas. If project activities cannot avoid the bird breeding season, active nests should be avoided and provided a buffer as determined by a qualified biologist. Active raptor nests identified during the pre-project surveys will be avoided with a 500-foot buffer zone or as determined by the qualified biologist	
	Vegetation removal would potentially affect migratory bird and wildlife habitats.	**BIO-3:** Implement the following measures to minimize the long-term impacts of loss of vegetative cover following fuel modification: ▪ Maintain clumps of native species in treated areas to avoid clear cuts. ▪ Encourage and/or assist property owners to establish native tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant cover in areas of cleared eucalyptus, pepper or acacia trees. ▪ Encourage and/or assist property owners to establish or restore stable vegetation cover along public roadways using native grassland or understory species. ▪ Prepare and make available guidelines for establishing stable vegetative cover in fuel management areas that is compatible with native flora and with fuel reduction objectives. Maintain and make available a list of qualified restoration specialists who can assist homeowners in implementing these guidelines.	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 3 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class II – Significant but Mitigable Impacts			
Biological Resources (continued)	Vegetation removal would potentially affect migratory bird and wildlife habitats.	**BIO-4:** Avoid removal of oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) and minimize removal of native understory vegetation (including oak seedlings and saplings) from oak woodlands. **BIO-5:** Minimize the number of personnel working in creeks and creek buffers. Avoid use of heavy equipment in creeks or creek buffers (including at existing road crossings and bridges or culverts).. **BIO-6:** Develop and make available riparian tree and understory restoration guidelines prepared by a qualified restoration specialist and encourage property owners to implement the guidelines following vegetative thinning and removal of non-native plant species.	Less than significant.
	Vegetation removal would potentially encourage the establishment and spread of invasive exotic plant species.	**BIO-7:** Treat weedy plant material in a manner that prevents its reestablishment. This would include removing seed heads and parts capable of resprouting such as giant reed (*Arundo donax*) stems and rhizomes and destroy them by burning or disposing of them off site in an approved manner (through Santa Barbara County Public Works Solid Waste Division).	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 4 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class II – Significant but Mitigable Impacts			
Biological Resources (continued)	Vegetation removal would potentially encourage the establishment and spread of invasive exotic plant species.	**BIO-8:** Conduct roadside hazard reduction operations along public roadways (including mowing) in the spring prior to seed set in the spring to the extent practicable. Coordinate roadside hazard reduction activities with County Roads Department. **BIO-9:** Restore stable groundcover along public roadways using native grassland or understory species according to guidelines prepared by a qualified local biologist for establishing stable vegetative cover that is compatible with native flora and with fuel reduction objectives.	Less than significant.
	Vegetation removal in and adjacent to riparian areas would potentially increase erosion, resulting in increased sedimentation and turbidity in creeks.	**BIO-10:** Minimize disturbance of soil or clearing of vegetation in riparian corridors during migratory and breeding season of anadromous fish (November 1 to July 31) in project area streams when streamflow is present.	Less than significant.
	Removal of Nuttall's scrub oak would affect the population of this candidate species.	**BIO-11:** Avoid removal of scrub oaks including Nuttall's scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*) and similar-appearing scrub oaks (*Q. berberidifolia*) wherever feasible consistent with fuel modification objectives. These long-lived species can be left as "specimens" in fuel management areas. These species are likely to be present in the vicinity of Bella Vista Drive, Ladera Lane, and Romero Canyon and along the Edison power line service roads.	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 5 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class II – Significant but Mitigable Impacts			
Biological Resources (continued)	Use of Phos-check could result in algal blooms that are known to deplete oxygen and cause toxic conditions for aquatic biota, amphibians, and fish. Use of Phos-check could stimulated the growth of annual grasses and weeds in treated areas.	**BIO-12:** Avoid the use of Phos-check near Plan area streams and culverted road crossings that lead to drainages. Restrict the use of Phos-check to the dry periods of the year (generally July through September) to minimize the potential for the material to be washed into project area streams.	Less than significant.
		BIO-13: Monitor growth of annual grasses and weeds in areas treated with Phos-check and compare to growth in similar areas not treated with Phos-check. Modify the use of Phos-check as necessary depending on the results of monitoring.	
	Fuel modification in eucalyptus stands (e.g., Eucalyptus around drainages) could degrade sensitive habitat for Monarch butterflies.	**BIO-14:** Maintain an updated listing and map of Monarch butterfly habitats (i.e,. data compiled by the Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department, or a source recommended by them) and avoid clearing occupied Monarch butterfly habitats and associated forage plants. For recognized clustering sites (e.g., at Ennisbrook) conduct fuel modification activities following County guidelines to the extent feasible consistent with fuel modification requirements. **BIO-15:** Restore native tree and understory cover in areas of cleared eucalyptus following habitat restoration guidelines (see Mitigation Measure BIO-6).	Less than significant.
Noise	The proposed project would result in short-term noise impacts affecting outdoor living areas of sensitive residential receptors from the use of chippers and chain saws during vegetation clearing.	**NOISE-1:** Vegetation removal activities within 1,600 feet of residential receptors shall be limited to the hours between 7 A.M. and 4 P.M. Monday through Friday. Equipment maintenance shall be limited to the same hours.	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 6 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class III – Less Than Significant Impacts			
Cultural Resources	Disturbance of ground surfaces during burning of cut vegetation would have little potential to impact previously unrecorded archaeological site deposits.	**CR-1:** Use only handheld tools to clear surface vegetation for burn piles and to create clearance on the edge of burn pile. Limit all ground disturbances to a 2-inch depth.	Less than significant.
Visual Resources	Removal of dead and decadent vegetation would potentially degrade views of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and foothill areas as experienced from public roadways	None required.	Less than significant.
	Use of fire retardants along Mountain Drive, upper Park Lane, and Bella Vista Drive would remove grassy ground cover on roadside shoulder cut slopes, affecting views of foothills.	None required.	Less than significant.
	Trimming of oak tree canopy extending over Bella Vista Drive, Ladera Lane, Sycamore Canyon, the San Ysidro Creek drainage area, and the Romero Canyon area would affect the rural visual character.	None required.	Less than significant.
Water Resources/ Flooding	The proposed project would not result in discharge to or alteration of surface waters or groundwater, and would not require any additional demand on water resources.	None required.	Less than significant.
Transportation/ Circulation	The number of additional average daily trips resulting from maintenance activity would be extremely few in relation to the existing roadway capacity. In addition, the proposed project would not require any large earthmoving equipment that would potentially obstruct roadways.	None required.	Less than significant.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class III – Less Than Significant Impacts			
Air Quality	The proposed project would involve some pile or windrow burning in selected areas where vegetation is cleared on designated burn days. Impacts on air quality would be minimal.	None required	Less than significant.
Risk of Upset	The proposed Plan would involve the continued use of chemical fire retardants including Phos-check. The storage and application of the chemical would be carried out in strict accordance with manufacturer's specifications.	None required.	Less than significant.
Geological Resources	Excessive disturbance to soil surfaces and root structures would not occur.	None required.	Less than significant.
Class IV – Beneficial Impacts			
Public Facilities	The removal of dead and decadent vegetation would reduce the potential intensity of wildland fires and property damage.	None required.	Beneficial.
Water Resources	The proposed Plan would implement a wildland fuels modification program. Plan implementation would reduce the potential for intense wild fires and property damage. This preventive action would potentially reduce the amount of water required in future fire fighting activities.	None required.	Beneficial.

TABLE 1-1. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

(Page 8 of 8)

Resource	*Impact*	*Policy/Mitigation*	*Residual Impact*
Class IV – Beneficial Impacts			
Biological Resources	Removal of non-native species would enhance the biological value of riparian corridors and terrestrial habitat areas.	**BIO-16:** Preferentially remove non-native invasive species from riparian corridors (e.g., *Vinca major, Arundo* donax, German ivy, Algerian ivy, Italian thistle, wild radish, nasturtium, smilo grass, arrow weed, *Myporum,* juvenile/sapling eucalyptus trees, fennel, iceplant, tree tobacco, castor bean, mustard, fountain grass, etc.) as part of vegetative thinning. **BIO-17:** Remove giant cane (*Arundo donax*) whenever encountered in treatment areas with the objective of preventing its spread and contribution to a future fire hazard.	Beneficial.
		BIO-18: Monitor treated areas and implement appropriate measures to control invasive exotic species including castor bean as part of maintaining treated areas.	
Fire Protection	The proposed project is to implement a wildland fuels modification program. This would be the most effective approach in helping maintain the priorities of the District.	None Required.	Beneficial.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 DESCRIPTION OVERVIEW

The Montecito Fire Protection District (MFPD) is proposing to implement a regional plan to reduce fuel loads and flammability in heavily vegetated areas in the community. The goal of this Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan (referred to as the "Plan") is to reduce the risk of life and property exposure to wildland fires by maintaining the extent of dead and decadent (nearing the end of its lifespan and in poor health due to low levels of internal moisture) vegetation that can serve to increase the intensity and extent of fire.

The MFPD has designed the Plan to minimize conflicts with other environmental resources. As part of its compliance with state law, the MFPD is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to assess the Plan's potential for impacting environmental resources such as biological resources, geological resources, visual resources, and archaeological resources.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The MFPD is located within the community of Montecito (see Figure 2-1). Montecito is an unincorporated portion of Santa Barbara County, which is a coastal county located in the northern part of Southern California. Located in the southeast portion of Santa Barbara County, its boundaries are the Pacific Ocean to the south, the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range to the north, the City of Santa Barbara to the west, and the unincorporated community of Summerland to the east. The MFPD is located within an area covered by the Santa Barbara Planning and Development Montecito Community Plan (June 1992) and all land use activities are directed by this Plan. The proposed Plan area would not include any lands owned by the Los Padres National Forest, or any properties subject to the National Environmental Policy Act until these areas were evaluated under this federal regulation.

2.3 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Santa Ynez Mountain Range, part of the greater Los Padres National Forest, contains steep terrain with vegetative fuels that are extremely flammable. Many exclusive homes are located in the upper mountain slopes and access to them is narrow and steep. This area, like many areas of Santa Barbara County, has experienced a large number of large wildland fires that have resulted in the loss of homes and lives.

The MFPD is responsible for protecting all the residents and structures within the District, as well as protection of many blocks of State Responsibility Areas (SRA). The SRA lands located in this area are primarily privately owned. As a result, fuel modification networks can be accomplished only by individual approval of each landowner involved. Most of the SRA land is made up of mature dense chaparral in the steep canyons and unstable mountain slopes that are inaccessible by any roads.

According to a Fire Protection Feasibility Study commissioned by the MFPD (FIREWISE 2000, Inc. 1998), the biggest fire threat affecting the community of Montecito is from a wildfire occurring under an explosive downslope Santa Ana wind influence. Extremely steep, dense and decadent chaparral covering south and southwest facing slopes of the Los Padres National Forest make for a

dangerous situation under these wind conditions. Three of the largest examples were the Coyote Fire in 1964, the Romero Fire in 1971, and the Sycamore Fire in 1977 (see Figure 2-2). Today, burned brush from these disastrous fires has developed to maturity and is capable of providing extensive fuel during a fire once more. In addition, the threat of fire and resulting damage is greater due to an increased amount of homes built in the area, some even deeper and higher into the canyons.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The MFPD has been proactively pursuing a number of fire mitigation projects. MFPD plans to implement fuel modification recommendations as outlined in the *Montecito Community Fire Protection Feasibility Study* (FIREWISE 2000, Inc. 1998). The objective of the Plan is to abate the risk of life and property exposure caused by wildland fires. Implementation of the Plan would reduce fuel loads and flammability in heavily vegetated areas by removing and selectively eliminating dead and decadent vegetation. This would serve to reduce the amount of dead and decadent vegetative fuels in selected fire hazard zones, including hazard reduction zones along roadsides. When clearing is not feasible, vegetation would be modified to effect more favorable fire behavior conditions. MFPD is also proposing additional mitigation projects for maintenance within the district. MFPD is proposing a Blanket Permit for these maintenance activities. Most of the plan components would be initially accomplished within a 5-year time frame, and then would be periodically maintained. In carrying out the Plan, the MFPD has considered how vegetation control can be successfully accomplished while minimizing conflicts with important environmental resources.

2.5 PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The MFPD proposes to remove dead vegetation in limited areas under the oaks adjacent to existing residences under a Blanket Permit for these maintenance activities. Fuel modification practices, including fuelbreaks and fire lanes, would help to contain a fire and provides a fire-safe driveable access route for firefighters. In addition, as a wildfire funnels down creeks, bridge safety clearings would allow firefighters to fight the blaze from roadways. No trees would be removed or cut down as part of the maintenance plan. The MFPD would encourage property owners to have non-native *Pittosporum* trees and bushes removed where it is hindering the growth and health of native oaks.

Vegetation management would not result in the removal of more than 50 percent cover (compared to the bare ground) from shrub and other native vegetation understory. Brush clearance in any one area would not occur more than once every three years.

All work would be done by hand, by MFPD staff or by contracted fire management professional contractors. Principal activities include removing dead and decadent shrubs, limbing trees, pruning out dead ladder fuels (that can carry fire from the ground into tree canopies), and weed whipping or mowing light flashy fuels. Vegetation would be removed and/or modified using three methods:

1. *Chipping*: When and where possible, vegetation would be chipped on site and the chipped biomass applied back to the project site in the area from which the vegetation was cleared. The chipper would be moved around as work occurs. Actual placement of the chipper would depend on the ability to minimize the distance vegetation would need to be hauled to the chipper. The majority of the time, the chipper would be along paved roads or driveways. It would never be placed within sensitive habitat areas. Refueling of the

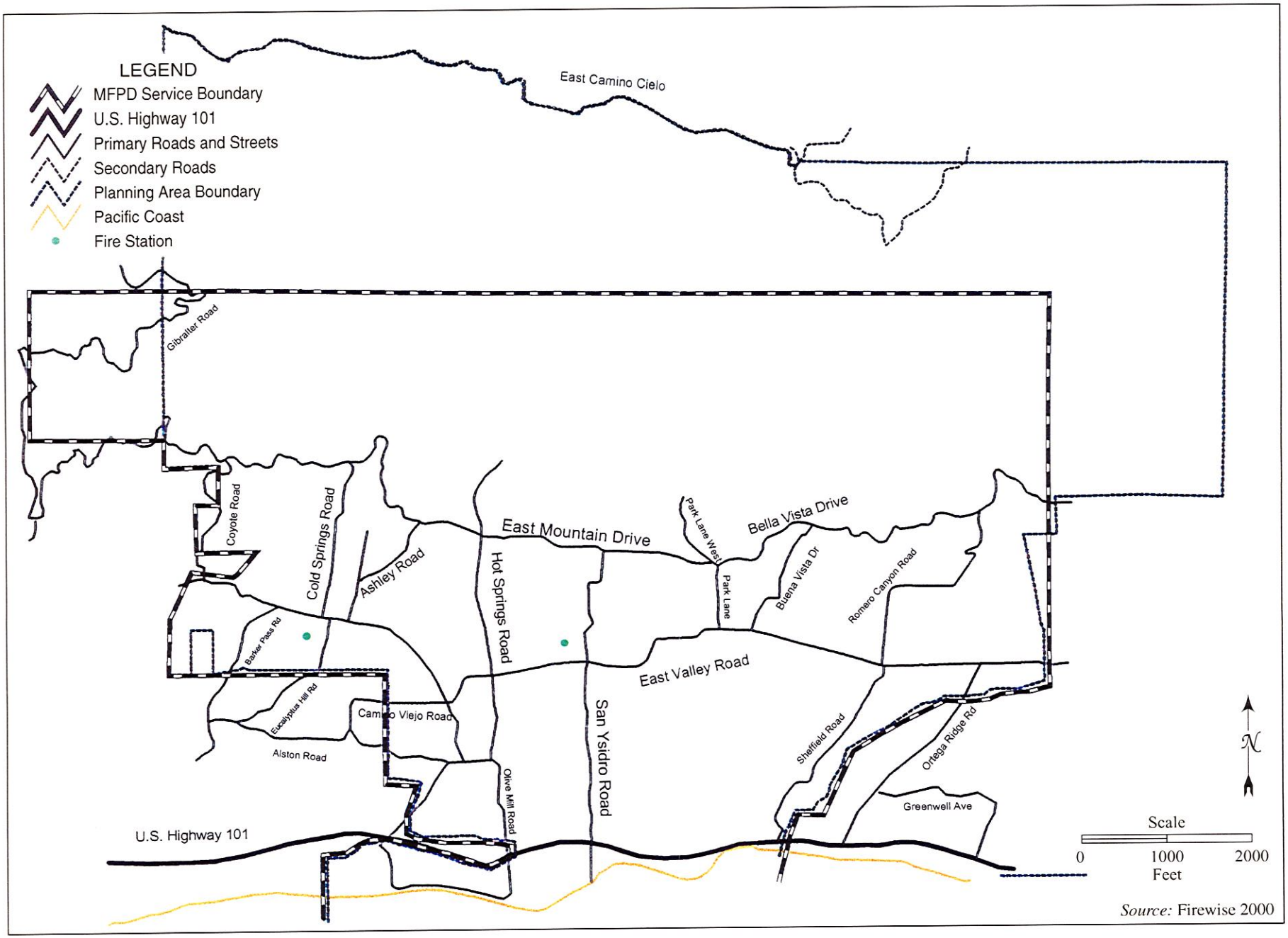

Figure 2-1. Fire Protection District Map

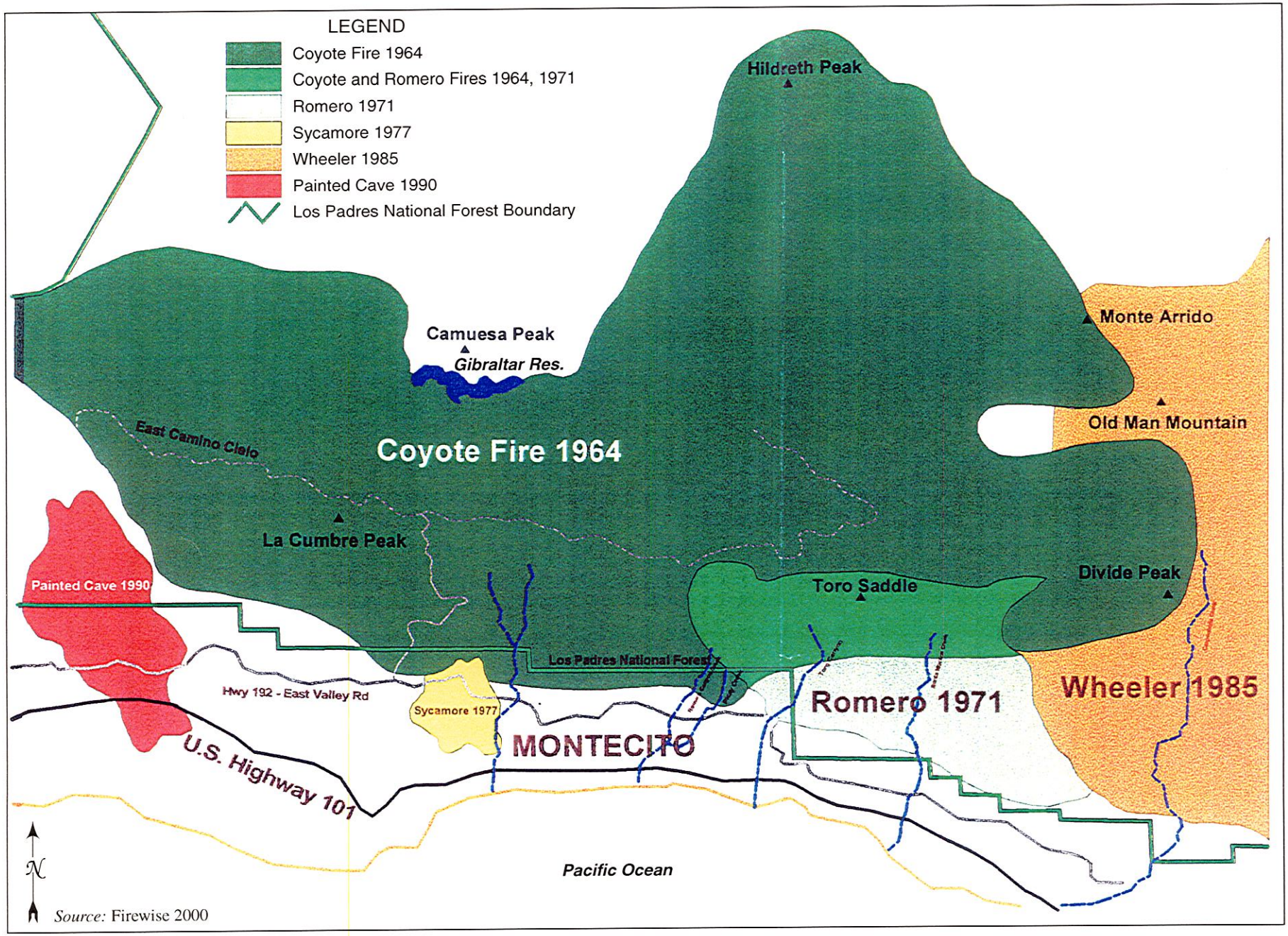

Figure 2-2. Historical Fire Map

chipper would occur outside riparian corridors and only on paved roads. Chips would not be spread more than 6 to 8 inches in depth, and all chip piles would be kept at least 5 feet from the dripline of oak trees. The storage and maintenance of the chipper would not occur within 50 feet of all streams and riparian areas.

2. *Multicutting* (known as *"drop and lop"*): Multicutting is a recycling method in which the MFPD cuts vegetation into lengths no longer than 6 inches, preferably 3 to 4 inches, much like chipped biomass. Cutting is done by hand using clippers or chain saws on the large material.

3. *Pile Burning*: Pile burning or windrow burning would be done in selected areas. The MFPD would take steps to minimize the creation of hydrophobic (water-repellent) conditions on the soil surface, partially by windrowing vegetation prior to burning instead of burning in large piles. After burning is accomplished, the soils under the piles would be slightly cultivated to break up the soil and mix in nutrients. A burn plan would be provided to the Air Pollution Control District (APCD) and burns would only take place on APCD designated "burn days."

Cut vegetation burning would require minimal ground disturbance. Hand-held tools would be used to clear surface vegetation into burn pile rows, to create clearance on the edge of the burn pile, and to clear a shallow trench at the base of the burn pile to catch any burned materials that would inadvertently roll downslope. Ground disturbance would not exceed a 2-inch depth so that root structures would remain in place. Burn pile rows would be aligned either in a horizontal direction parallel to a hill slope, or in a vertical direction perpendicular to the hill slope. Mechanized equipment such as chain saws, weed whips, mowers, and chippers could be used, but there would be no use of bulldozers or other earthmoving equipment.

Vegetation removal would also occur along roadside fuelbreak systems including Mountain/Bella Vista Drive (existing), Ladera Lane, Sycamore Canyon, San Ysidro Creek drainage area, and Romero Canyon area. Depending upon whether the primary requirement would be for fuel management or for access, roadside clearance would include the following:

- Clearing of flammable vegetation within 10 feet of roadsides (for fuel management).

- Vegetation clearance along the roadway horizontally to road right of way on either side of the road (to improve access as well as fuel management along narrow roadways) and vertical clearance of 13 feet 6 inches over the roadways to allow for access.

Although it is anticipated that most of the roadside vegetation clearing work would be done by property owners, the MFPD, or Santa Barbara County Public Works Department, Roads and Transportation Division could carry out some Plan components.

The MFPD has been carrying out some level of vegetation maintenance projects since 1994 (see Table 2-1) in areas such as Westmont College, Bella Vista Road, Mountain Drive, and Ortega Ridge Road. Vegetation maintenance in these areas would continue under the Plan. Proposed additional fuel modification project areas identified by the feasibility study commissioned by the MFPD and prepared by FIREWISE 2000, a national fire management specialist, are summarized in Table 2-2 and are illustrated in Figure 2-3. Additional Fuel Hazard and Abatement recommendations are listed in Table 2-3. All the projects listed in Tables 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 would be components of the proposed Plan. Figure 2-4 and Figure 2-5 provide examples of vegetation maintenance in the Bella Vista Area.

Table 2-1. Maintenance Mitigation Projects

Location	*Map Number*	*Description*
Westmont	1	Fire hazard mitigation project, started in 1994, now in maintenance program. Chipping, burning and some multicutting
Bella Vista (Romero to Ladera)	2	Roadside fire hazard reduction, started in 1994, originally cleared to about 100'. Now looking at 25' maintenance for roadside fire hazard reduction, multicutting with some chipping.
Bella Vista (2300 Block)	3	Same as Bella Vista above other than started in 1996.
Jackson Fuel Break	4	Fuel break, started in 1995, mostly maintenance at this time.
Mountain Drive (1000 block)	5	Thinning and clearing under eucalyptus trees, chipping, burning, and multicutting. Mostly maintenance at this time.
Roadside Fire Hazards (Mountain Dr.-Park Lane-Bella Vista)	6	Removing flammable vegetation for 10 to 15 feet on the roadside, with some vertical clearing. Chipping and multicutting.
Roadside Fire Hazards Ortega Ridge	7	Removing flammable vegetation for 10 to 15 feet on the roadside, with some vertical clearing. Chipping and multicutting.
Roadside Fire Hazards Gibraltar Road and Rattlesnake connector	8	Clearing flammable vegetation for 10 to 15 feet on Gibraltar Road with some vertical clearing. Clearing 10 feet from the Rattlesnake Connector Trail. Some work was done this year (1999). Chipping and multicutting. Would like to also do 10 feet roadside clearance on short road to Water Department water tank.

Some limited removal of brush would occur along riparian drainages adjacent to bridge crossings. This would include along Westmont Creek, Cold Springs Creek, Hot Springs Creek San Ysidro Creek, Buena Vista Creek, and Romero Creek. Vegetation maintenance would be done by hand and include thinning, pruning, limbing out dead fuels, weed whipping, and chipping or multi-cutting and spreading of cut biomass material. Selective removal of exotic plant species in these areas would occur. Occasional crossing of riparian watercourses would be required in strategic areas. Treatment within these crossings would be limited to hand cuttings and removal of dead and decadent material.

The MFPD has applied a fire retardant on flammable vegetation in selected locations along roadside shoulders and cut slopes adjacent to Mountain Drive and upper Park Lane. Spot application of fire retardants would continue in key fire hazard areas along these roadways, as well as portions of Bella Vista Drive, where other vegetation maintenance methods would not be feasible. Fire retardants are a suppressing agent applied by sprayers, and are specially formulated to retard or stop fire. The retardant is generally environmentally safe, biodegradable, non-corrosive, non-toxic, and approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for this use. All fire retardants contain ammonia, however, a compound that is potentially toxic to aquatic

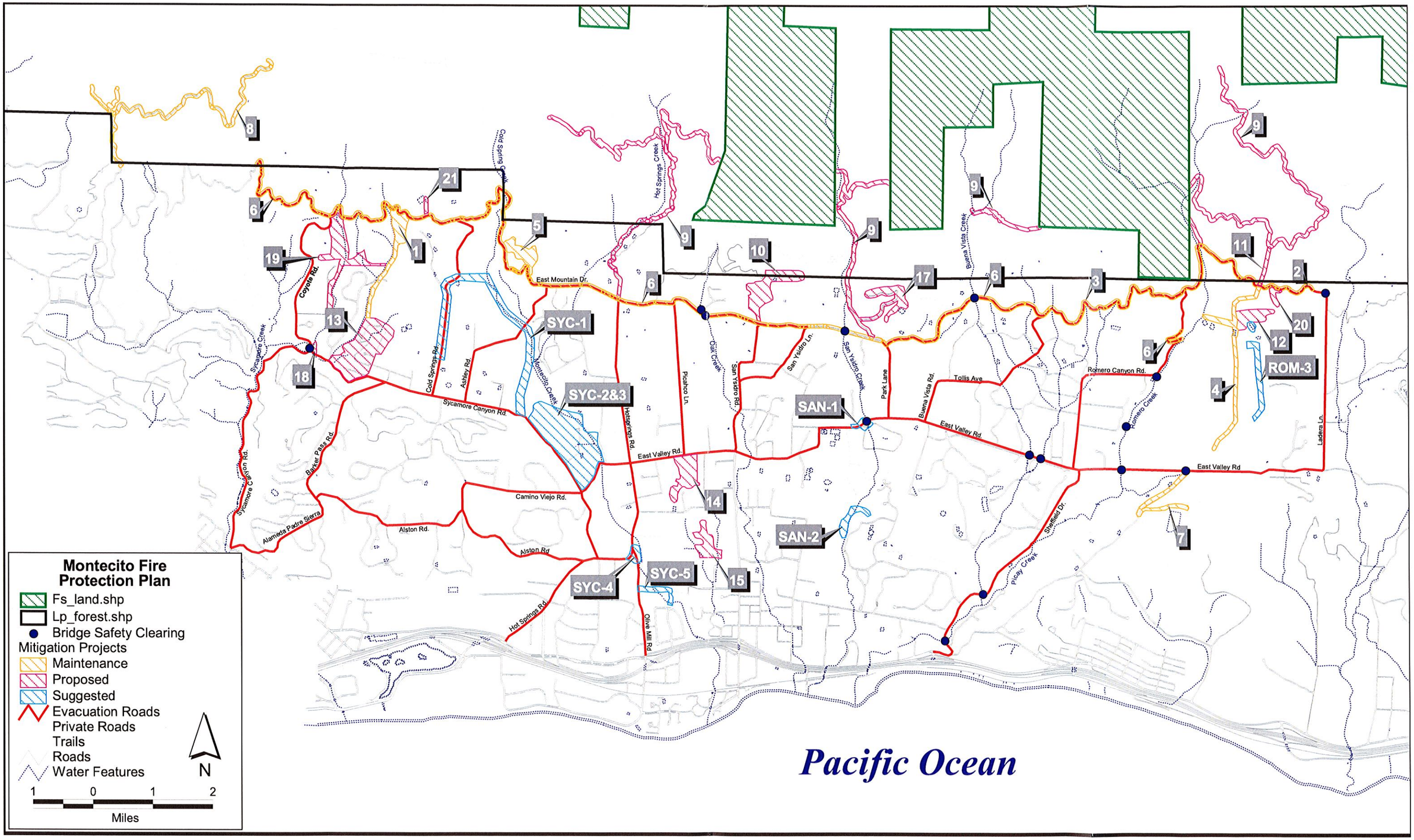

Figure 2-3. Maintenance and Proposed Mitigation Projects

View Looking North From Bella Vista Road

Figure 2-4. Bella Vista Area Vegetation Maintenance Activity

View Looking North From Bella Vista Road

Figure 2-5. Bella Vista Area Roadside Vegetation Maintenance Activity

Table 2-2. Proposed Mitigation Projects

Location	*Map Number*	*Description*
Edison Access Fire Hazard Reduction	9	Clearing flammable vegetation for 25' on roadsides and vertical clearing. Will be locating 3 to 4 Safety Zones (SZ) clearing and area of about 200' to use for staging fire equipment. Chipping and multicutting, with the possibility of doing some burning.
Mountain Drive San Ysidro West	10	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting.
Upper Jackson	11	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting. Located north of Bella Vista Road and running north to Los Padres National Forest.
Jackson East	12	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination burning, chipping, and multicutting.
Chelham Way of Neighborhood Community Program	13	The intention of this program is to work with and support local property owners for community fire hazard mitigation. Would like to have the ability to use our crews in this area.
Del Herrero	14	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting.
School House – San Ysidro	15	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting.
Evacuation Roads	Red Roads	Enforce vertical and horizontal clearance by property owners. Work with County Public works to do vegetation clearing. May use MFPD approved contractors to do work.
Park Lane Project	17	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting.
Santa Barbara City and Montecito	18	Vegetation thinning in the intersection of Sycamore Canyon and Coyote Roads. Installation of Fire Hazard Information Sign. Joint project between S.B. City Fire Department, Fire Safe Council, and Montecito Fire.
Coyote Road and Mountain Drive	19	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting.
Buckthorn Project	20	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting. Working in a 5-acre parcel south of Bella Vista Road and East of Buckthorn Road. A portion of the project may be located in the Carpinteria-Summerland Fire Protection District.
Terminal Reservoir	21	Vegetation mitigation with hand labor. Combination of burning, chipping, and multicutting. Working approximately 150 feet from roads on Water District and Tea House properties.
Bridge Safety Clearing	B	Removing flammable vegetation for 50' on both sides of local bridges. Also removal of non-native species.

life. In addition, the fire retardant salts in Phos-Check retardant, a common brand, are plant nutrients and, therefore, can cause excessive, undesirable growth of aquatic plants if introduced into a water course.

The following guidelines have been and would continue to be followed by the MFPD to avoid the entry of fire retardants into bodies of water:

- Mixing shall not be done near rivers or creeks; and

- MFPD shall avoid direct application of retardant into or on the banks of rivers, streams, or ponds.

Table 2-3. Fuel Hazard Abatement Treatment Recommendations

Location	*Description*	*Map Location*	*Acres*
Riparian Drainages: • Sycamore Canyon • Hot Springs Canyon • Romero Canyon • San Ysidro Creek	Riparian drainage fuel treatment. Thinning, pruning, limbing out dead fuels, weed whipping, and chipping or multicutting and spreading of cut biomass material. All fuel treatment would be conducted at least fifty (50) feet from the riparian watercourse. Occasional crossing of riparian watercourse would be required in strategic areas. Treatment within these crossings would be limited to hand cuttings of dead material.	SYC-1	14
		SYC-2	5
		SYC-3	4
		SYC-4	2
		SYC-5	4
		SAN –1	3
		SAN-2	2
		ROM-1	4
		ROM-2	4
		ROM-3	53

2.6 DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS REQUIRED

Approval of the proposed plan would entail the following discretionary actions by the Montecito Fire Protection District Board of Directors:

- Certification of the Environmental Impact Report.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Montecito is situated in the southern portion of Santa Barbara County. The area community is characterized as a semi-rural community located on a narrow coastal shelf between the coastline and the rugged slopes of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range. Several streams drain the slopes of the mountains and lead into the Pacific Ocean. Significant riparian habitat can still be found along Cold Springs, Hot Springs, and San Ysidro creeks.

The mountain slopes and foothills are vegetated with chaparral plant community, a dense cover of many different woody evergreen shrubs and herbaceous species. The chaparral especially contributes to the visual richness of Montecito and provides watershed and habitat protection.

The woodlands and forests of riparian corridors support the highest diversity and abundance of wildlife, particularly birds, of any habitat found in Santa Barbara County. Preservation of trees, including coast live oaks have helped to maintain a rich abundance of wildlife.

3.1 GENERAL PLAN LAND USE

Existing land uses can be grouped into three geographic areas: the coastal zone, the urban area, and the rural area. Land uses within the coastal zone are primarily single family and duplex residential lots with resort visitor-serving commercial uses, such as the Miramar and Biltmore hotels. The Santa Barbara Cemetery is also located within Montecito's coastal zone. The urban area contains primarily 1-acre residential estate lots along with several educational uses, government facilities, recreational uses, and neighborhood commercial. The rural portion of the planning area contains a very low density of residential uses due to the rugged mountain topography.

3.2 PROJECT CONSIDERED FOR CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS

Pursuant to CEQA Section 15130 (1) (a), this EIR discusses those "past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects" that, when considered together with the project, could compound or increase environmental impacts. A broad cumulative analysis provided in the Montecito Community Plan Update EIR, 92-EIR-03 (Envicom Corporation) is incorporated by reference. Because the cumulative analysis in 92-EIR-03 addresses buildout of the entire community planning area, it is considered adequate for addressing reasonably worst-case cumulative impacts.

Projects in the vicinity of the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan Area are included in the cumulative projects analysis because the effect of environmental impacts in Montecito would be compounded by environmental impacts of nearby projects. Examples include traffic, watershed, visual resources (e.g. views from U.S. Highway 101 and S.R. 192), public services (e.g., school demand), and biological impacts (e.g., loss of habitat).

Under the Community Plan, growth would be limited to 600 single-family residences, 355 affordable housing units, up to 12,200 square feet of commercial space, and 10 hotel rooms. The scope of cumulative analysis varies according to the environmental issue and therefore the cumulative analysis is discussed within individual resource analysis sections.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

4.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section addresses the biological resources, including plant and animal life, within the proposed Plan area.

4.1.1 Existing Setting

The Plan area was visited several times during the spring and summer, 2000. During these field trips, the presence and types of plants and wildlife were recorded. Plant communities are characterized in accordance with Holland (1986); vegetation nomenclature follows Smith (1998) and Jepson (1993); wildlife species taxonomy is consistent with the California Natural Diversity Database, Jennings and Hayes (1994), and Stebbins (1987). Bird names follow standardized English nomenclature used in the American Ornithologist's Union (AOU) *Checklist of North American Birds*.

4.1.1.1 Vegetation

Northern Mixed Chaparral. This vegetation community forms dense, nearly impenetrable stands and is typically dominated by any one of several common taxa. Northern mixed chaparral is typically found on dry, rocky, often steep slopes with little soil. There is usually little or no understory vegetation and often a considerable accumulation of leaf litter. Chaparral species are adapted to repeated fires, to which many species respond by stump sprouting (Holland 1986). This vegetation type is similar to southern mixed chaparral and may form a mosaic with Venturan coastal sage scrub (Holland 1986). Latin names provided below follow Smith (1998).

Chaparral vegetation dominates the steep, rocky hillsides and higher elevations of the Plan area in the vicinity of Gibraltar Road and undeveloped areas north of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and Bella Vista Drive. Man-made breaks in the chaparral exist primarily at public and private road cuts, the Edison utility company maintenance road, public trails, and on private properties where vegetation has been partially or wholly cleared to protect an existing structure or structures currently under construction. The most abundant shrubs in this community include woody species such as bigpod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*), greenbark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). Scattered among these shrubs are coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*), manzanita, Our Lord's candle (*Yucca whipplei*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Native shrubs commonly observed in the road cut and in shallowly sloped valleys include species typically found in coastal sage scrub communities such as, California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), deer weed (*Lotus scoparius*), coast goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), *Keckiella cordifolia*, canyon sunflower (*Venegasia carpesioides*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum* sp.), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.), phacelia (*Phacelia* sp.), giant rye grass (*Leymus condensatus*), and coastal morning glory (*Calystegia macrostegia* ssp. *cyclostegia*).

For much of the length of West Mountain Drive, East Mountain Drive, and Bella Vista from the western end near Gibraltar Road to Ladera Lane at the eastern end, the north side of the road

predominantly supports chaparral species, while the south side of the road supports a predominance of coastal sage scrub species. However, interspersed within native vegetation are areas landscaped with ornamental species. In addition, dense patches of non-native, invasive species such as castor bean, mustard, eucalyptus trees, non-native grasses and yellow star thistle have colonized the road cuts. Non-native, invasive species have also spread uphill along the Edison powerline service road north of Hot Springs Road; in at least one tributary drainage a substantial amount of German ivy has colonized the oak trees and smothered the native understory vegetation. Other non-native species observed along road cuts of Mountain/East Mountain Drive include annual grasses, fennel, iceplant, fountain grass, tree tobacco, mustard, castor bean, and yellow star thistle. There are also a variety of ornamental species that probably escaped and have colonized the disturbed area along the road. These species include aloe, agave, eucalyptus and olive trees, and bougainvillea.

On July 3, 2000 the "drop and lop" treatment was observed in the Hot Springs Road area north of East Mountain Drive along the Edison powerline service road. Vegetation (including whole shrubs, large *Ceanothous* sp., toyon and oak tree limbs) had been cut with a chain saw and stockpiled alongside the Edison powerline service road. This treatment was evident from the Edison powerline service road gate to the point at which the road splits to the west and east to follow the existing power line towers.

Coastal Sage Scrub. The Montecito Community Plan EIR (Santa Barbara County 1992), unlike the Summerland and Goleta Community Plan(s) did not identify coastal sage scrub as an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat type; however, it is recognized as one of six naturally occurring habitats in the Plan area.

Venturan coastal sage scrub is found on dry, rocky or soil covered slopes. Species are lower growing, less woody, and less dense than chaparral species. This community is comprised of summer dormant species that are adapted to fire similar to chaparral species; however, crown sprouting rather than stump sprouting occurs following a fire event (Holland 1986).

Coastal sage scrub vegetation is more commonly observed at lower elevations in the Plan area (i.e., south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and north of East Valley Road) from Gibraltar Road to Ladera Lane. Some of the largest areas of coastal sage scrub occur in the vicinity of Coyote Road/Sycamore Canyon, between Romero Canyon Road and Ladera Lane north of East Valley Road (this area is currently undergoing development of large estates within the Cima del Mundo subdivision). Other large areas of coastal sage scrub occur on west-facing slopes of Ortega Ridge Road and on parcels within the Montecito Valley Ranch subdivision (these parcels are currently being developed with single family residences although the hillsides are largely intact). Large stands of coastal sage scrub are not common in other portions of the Plan area due to the extensive amount of clearing and landscaping that has been completed by private property owners to protect existing structures or during preparation of land for structures currently under construction. This vegetation community is also somewhat reduced in its extent in the Plan area due to numerous road cuts. The disturbance created by the road cuts has led to a proliferation of non-native grasses and forbs (described above), which have established in the road right-of-way.

Despite the paucity of large stands of coastal sage scrub on lowlands within the Plan area, some species area commonly observed. Native coastal sage scrub species in the Plan area include California sagebrush, purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), coyote bush, coastal encelia (*Encelia*

californica), coast goldenbush, monkey flower, deerweed, poison oak, laurel sumac, and coastal morning glory. Scattered among the coastal sage scrub in the Plan area are elderberry trees, buckwheat (common in road cuts), black sage, climbing penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*), chamise, Our Lord's candle, bigpod ceanothus (tree like growth form), and coast live oak trees.

Non-native species are very common along and south of East Mountain Drive. Many species appear to have colonized following disturbance. Non-native species that respond to disturbance and are common in the Plan area include: mustard, non-native annual grasses, fountain grass, castor bean, and yellow star thistle. It is also apparent that some non-native species have been intentionally planted by private property owners, and include: eucalyptus, various agave species, aloe, beavertail cactus, bougainvillea, oleander, and pepper trees (*Schinus molle*).

Oak Woodlands. Oak woodlands are defined by the Santa Barbara County Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines (1995) as areas characterized by the type of oak or other trees present, the understory and/or associated vegetation and wildlife communities. In the Plan area the canopy of oak woodlands provides virtually complete and unbroken cover of the understory below. Oak woodlands in the Plan area are somewhat limited in distribution to riparian corridors (such as along Cold Springs Creek, Hot Springs Creek, San Ysidro Creek, Montecito Creek, Romero Creek and in the drainage basin bordered by Park Lane on the west and Ladera Lane on the east). Well-developed oak woodlands typically include dying or dead trees that provide complexity in the habitat for wildlife (e.g., cover, denning and nesting sites, forage, shade), although dead oak trees are usually targeted for removal by property owners and municipalities. Acorns produced from living oak trees provide food for numerous species of migratory and resident birds and native wildlife species and are the seed source for natural regeneration. The limited extent of oak woodland habitats is largely due to urbanization and existing agricultural development that is not compatible with native tree canopy cover (Montecito Community Plan EIR, 1992).

Central Coast Cottonwood-Sycamore Riparian Forest and South Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest. Central Coast Cottonwood-Sycamore Riparian Forest is typically observed along floodplains of sub-perennial streams, with coarse boulder material in the stream and seasonally variable depths to groundwater. This community intergrades with coast live oak and arroyo willow dominated riparian forest at lower elevations but is the dominant riparian community in steep drainages. According to Holland (1986), this vegetation community consists primarily of moderately closed broadleafed riparian forests that are dominated by Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), with lesser amounts of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*).

South Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest is typically observed in bottomlands and outer floodplains with rich alluvial soils along larger streams (such as in lower elevations of the project areas). This vegetation community may have an open or dense canopy and is dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Understory species are generally comprised of more herbaceous species (such as grasses, forbs and wildflowers) than other riparian communities (Holland 1986).

In the Plan area, riparian corridors north of Mountain/East Mountain Drive are dominated by Western sycamore and coast live oak trees. Drainages also support willow trees in areas where the canopy is more open. Other native trees observed, but not dominant, in riparian corridors include white alder, black cottonwood, California bay, and elderberry. Riparian corridors south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive are dominated by coast live oak with sycamore trees becoming

less dominant at lower elevations. In addition, non-native trees and large shrubs (such as eucalyptus, acacia and pine trees, bottle brush, *Pittosporum* and *Myoporum*) as well as herbaceous species (such as arrow weed, fennel, Algerian ivy) become more abundant along riparian corridors as creeks traverse residential areas and at creek/road crossings.

Planted Pine and Eucalyptus Woodlands. Planted pine and eucalyptus woodlands also exist in the Plan area. Several species of eucalyptus trees (e.g., *Eucalyptus globulus*) are common in the Plan area and are known to form dense stands due to the establishment of seedlings in the vicinity of the adults. Stands of eucalyptus exist along Mountain/East Mountain Drive and East Valley Road in the road right-of-way, at stream crossings, and on several private properties in the Plan area. Private properties with substantial stands of eucalyptus trees include Westmont College, Ashley Road at Cold Spring Creek crossing, private residences east of Romero Canyon Road on Bella Vista Road, East Valley Road at Montecito Creek crossing, private residences in the vicinity of Schoolhouse Road. Pine woodlands are less conspicuous in the Plan area, however the Montecito Community Plan EIR (Figure 35) indicates that pine woodlands exist in small stands along East Valley Road between Sycamore Canyon Road and Park Lane and on the Westmont College campus.

Grasslands. Native grasslands are defined in the Santa Barbara County Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines (1995) as areas that support 10 percent or more of total relative cover of perennial native grass species (such as purple needlegrass, *Nassella pulchra*). Holland (1986) also defines grassland communities. Valley Needlegrass Grassland is a mid-height grassland dominated by perennial bunchgrass, *N. pulchra*. Non-native annual grass species and native annual wildflowers are typically interspersed among *N. pulchra*, and may exceed *N. pulchra* in percent cover. This vegetation community is typically observed on fine-textured (often clay) soils that are moist or water-logged in winter and very dry in summer. Large stands of Valley Needlegrass grasslands may form mosaics with oak woodlands across the landscape (Holland 1986). The distribution of these communities is believed to have once extended around much of the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento and Salinas valleys, and the Los Angeles Basin, but has been significantly reduced due to urbanization and agricultural development.

Non-native grasslands, as defined by Holland (1986), are more common in the Plan area than native needlegrass grasslands. Non-native grasslands typically form dense stands. Associated species include a variety of native wildflowers in favorable years. This vegetation community is commonly observed in valleys and foothills below 3000-4000 feet in most of California except the north coast and desert regions. Non-native grasses and associated species became established during the Mission period and spread rapidly during the mid-19th century, encroaching on native grasslands and herblands. The distribution of these communities also formerly extended around much of the San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento and Salinas valleys, and the Los Angeles Basin, but has been significantly reduced due to urbanization and agricultural development.

Naturally occurring grasslands are rare within the Plan area. Where grasslands do occur outside of urbanized areas, it is most often the result of clearing (of chaparral and coastal sage scrub vegetation). Grasslands in the Plan area consist mostly of small disjunct patches of non-native annual species. Small areas supporting native perennial grasses occur within the Plan area in less developed areas in the lower foothills, south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and along road cuts.

Agricultural Lands (Citrus and Avocado Orchards). Productive agricultural lands in the Plan area are primarily comprised of citrus and avocado orchards. Agricultural lands exist mostly south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and Bella Vista Road, and along Romero Creek (Montecito Community Plan EIR, 1992).

Urban/Ornamental. Ornamental vegetation in the form of planted landscaping material is the predominant understory vegetation within developed areas of the Plan area south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive from Coyote Road to Ladera Lane. Urban/ornamental vegetation consists of a wide variety of non-native grasses, herbs, shrubs and trees, associated with private residential and commercial developments.

4.1.1.2 Wildlife

Amphibians and Reptiles. A variety of native and non-native amphibians have been observed or are known to occur in the Plan area. Frog species, including the Pacific tree frog (*Hyla regilla*) and the non-native bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) are common throughout the developed and undeveloped portions of the Plan area. Less common are California red-legged frog, a Federally listed threatened species and the Southwestern pond turtle, a Federal and State Species of Concern. California newt, a locally rare species with no formal protection status, has been observed along trails in the vicinity of Hot Springs Creek and likely occurs in several of the flowing streams within the Plan area.

Commonly occurring reptiles include the gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus*), western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), Western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), southern alligator lizard (*Gerrhonotus multicarinatus*) and side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*). These reptiles are expected to occur in less disturbed areas within the chaparral, coastal scrub and riparian habitats within the Plan area. Western fence lizards and side-blotched lizards will also occur in semi-disturbed areas, including areas frequented by humans.

Birds. The various habitats within the Plan area support numerous avian species. Most of the species discussed below will occur in several of the habitats including those vegetated areas close to roads and human exposure. The chaparral and coastal scrub communities support a variety of species such as California quail, Anna's hummingbird, wrentit, bushtit, California towhee, spotted towhee, western scrub jay and white-crowned sparrow. Riparian corridors offer important resources such as cover, food and nesting habitat for a large number of avian species including Pacific slope flycatcher, purple finch, warbling vireo, orange crowned warbler, yellow warbler and Wilson's warbler. Species such as Hutton's vireo, house wren, oak titmouse, mourning dove and acorn woodpecker are commonly observed in the oak woodland within the Plan area. Larger trees such as oaks and non-native eucalyptus offer larger bird species important roost and nest sites. Red shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, white tailed kite, turkey vulture, American crow, great-horned owl and barn owl are all present in the Plan area and are expected to roost and nest in the area.

Mammals. Most of the larger mammal species expected to be present in the Plan area will use a variety of habitats. Species such as coyote (*Canis latrans*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) have large home ranges and could be expected to forage throughout the less disturbed portions of the Plan area. Some of these species such as the coyote, opossum and striped skunk will tolerate a limited amount of human disturbance and will

occasionally be observed in suburban areas. Smaller mammals including cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus audobonii*), California ground squirrels (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), pocket gophers (*Thomomys bottae*) and several species of rodents such as deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), harvest mice (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), house mice (*Mus musculus*), dusky-footed woodrat (Neotoma *fuscipes*), and black rat (*Rattus rattus*) are common throughout the Plan area.

4.1.1.3 Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

The Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992) identifies four Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA). Other ESHA's are found within the Plan area (such as at the marine interface), however the project is expected to avoid these areas.

Riparian Corridors/Creeks/Wetlands. The major streams in the Plan area are Cold Spring Creek and Hot Springs Creek which intersect to form Montecito Creek; San Ysidro Creek, and Romero Creek. Minor creeks and tributaries to larger drainages are Coyote Creek, Westmont and Chelham creeks, Buena Vista, East Buena Vista and Picay creeks. Several riparian corridors in the Plan area are relatively undisturbed. Native riparian tree and understory species dominate riparian corridors north of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and in some reaches at lower elevations of Cold Spring Creek/Montecito Creek, San Ysidro Creek, Buena Vista Creek and tributaries leading to Picay Creek, and Romero Creek. Clearing of riparian understory species however is common on private properties through which creeks flow, as well as on agricultural lands, where clearing has occurred to maximize the use of arable land. Wetlands are largely confined within the banks of creek channels and at the marine interface.

Oak Woodlands and Individual Trees. Individual specimen oak trees (greater than six inches diameter at breast height) are relatively common within the Plan area. However, individual trees and oak woodlands are being reduced in extent as a result of urban/residential and agricultural development.

Oak woodlands, as identified in the Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992), exist in the western Plan area along Coyote and Cold Spring Creek, in the vicinity of La Casa de Maria, along lower San Ysidro Creek, and on parcels located between Park Lane and Romero Canyon Road. Most of the larger stands of oak woodlands occur south of Mountain/East Mountain Drive.

Oak trees are common along roadways in the Plan area and limbs commonly overhang the road and trunks are often very close to the travel lanes. In some areas, oak limbs and trunks obstruct line-of-sight.

Native Grasslands. Occasional patches of native perennial bunchgrass are located in the less developed foothills of the Plan area. Individual plants are not as uncommon as large native grassland stands in the Plan area, but are susceptible to further declines in abundance due to the spread of invasive exotic species such as mustard and yellow star thistle and due to land clearing for the purpose of residential or agricultural development.

Monarch Butterfly Roosts/Habitats. According to the most recent comprehensive study of Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) overwintering sites in Santa Barbara County (Meade 1999) and the California Natural Diversity Database, there are seven overwintering sites in the Montecito Planning area and in the Plan area. The western-most sites are located in and around Butterfly Lane and the Music Academy of the West (south of U.S. 101), and Hot Springs Road and Summit

Road (north of U.S. 101). Other overwintering sites in the Plan area are located at or near Ennisbrook, the Crane School, at 305 Ortega Hill Road, and nestled between U.S. 101, Sheffield Drive and Ortega Ridge Road. Vegetation associated with these sites often include dense assemblages of non-native blue-gum eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and ornamental/landscape species and citrus, annual grasses, poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*), pine trees (such as Italian stone pine, *Pinus leppo*), and invasive German ivy (*Senecio mikanoides*).

4.1.1.4 Sensitive Species

The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, Santa Barbara and Carpinteria USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle sheets) was reviewed for the presence of sensitive species including those listed or proposed as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Concern by the state and federal government. Species of local concern as recognized by the Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department as well as those listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) are noted below.

Plants. The CNDDB indicates that the late-flowered mariposa lily, *Calochortus weedii* var. *vestus*, exists in the Plan area (Carpinteria quadrangle) in the Romero Canyon area. This species is considered a Species of Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, although it has no formal listing status by the State of California. The CNPS also recognizes this plant as a species that is rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere (List 1B). A related species, the Catalina mariposa lily, *Calochortus catalinae*, is also known to occur in the Plan area. This species is not listed by the CNDDB, state or federal government, but it is listed by the CNPS as a species with limited distribution (List 4) and is noted as being present in the vicinity of Hot Springs Creek and the Edison powerline service road. These species are most likely associated with the oak woodland and chaparral vegetation communities in the Plan area north of Mountain/East Mountain Drive.

Nuttall's scrub oak, *Quercus dumosa*, (a species of local concern and CNPS List 1B plant) may exist in the eastern portion of the Plan area as it is relatively common from Ladera Lane east toward Carpinteria. It is also abundant in the Toro Canyon Community Plan Area below an elevation of about 1000 feet. This species is known to hybridize with a more common, higher elevation scrub oak species, *Q. berberidifolia*. The distribution of *Q. dumosa*, although patchy, may extend west through the Plan area to Gaviota (Smith 1998), although no specimens were observed during field reconnaissance in July 2000.

Santa Barbara honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata* ssp. *subspicata*) has been identified by the Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department as a species of local concern. This species is scattered among the chaparral and coastal sage scrub along the front range of the Santa Ynez mountains from Carpinteria to Refugio Canyon (Smith 1998). Although its distribution is limited to lower elevations in the Plan area, it is not listed by CNPS nor is it afforded formal protected by the State or Federal government.

The Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992, Table 27) also lists several other sensitive endemic species that were determined to be at risk under full buildout of the Community Plan. Although, the Community Plan EIR did not provide Latin names for the species shown in Table 27, several of these species are likely to occur in the Plan area currently under review. It is important to note that only four of the species listed in the Montecito Community Plan EIR (Table 27) are also listed by

the CNPS. Those four species are Catalina mariposa lily (*Calochortus catalinae*), Plummer's baccharis (List 4, *Baccharis plummerae*), bitter gooseberry (List 3, *Ribes amarum*), and Parish's checkerbloom (List 1B, *Sidalcea hickmanii* ssp. *parishii*). The last species, Parish's checkerbloom, is also a candidate for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and is listed as rare by the State of California; however it was not observed during field surveys.

Amphibians and Reptiles. Although the CNDDB overlay sheets for the Santa Barbara and Carpinteria quadrangles do not report observations of sensitive wildlife species in the Plan area, the Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992) contains references to the Biological Resources Survey report (Tierney and Storrer, 1990) in which sensitive species were observed during preparation of the EIR. Based on those data and subsequent surveys conducted for individual projects (e.g., subdivisions, commercial and single family residential development), the following sensitive amphibian and reptile species and/or suitable habitat are known or expected to occur within the Plan area. Species reported from the Plan area in the Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992) include: California newt (*Taricha torosa*), California red-legged (*Rana aurora draytonii*), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*), and California mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata*). These species are typically associated with major and minor creeks in the Plan area but may range into the chaparral and coastal sage scrub communities.

The California newt and the California mountain king snake have no federal or state special status but are considered species of local concern (Montecito Community Plan EIR, 1992).

The California red-legged frog is listed as threatened by the Federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is listed as a Species of Concern by the California Department of Fish and Game. The southwestern pond turtle and the two-striped garter snake are listed as Federal and State Species of Concern. Due to the special status of these species, permits are required in order to "take" specimens or remove them from harm's way.

Birds. Several sensitive bird species are know or expected to occur and/or nest in the Plan area, as reported in the Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992). Raptor nests and roosts are protected by the California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5. Migratory species and nests are also protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918).

The vicinity of Ortega Ridge Road has previously been used by a pair of white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*) for nesting, foraging and roosting. This species has been designated as a species of local concern by Santa Barbara County Department of Planning and Development Department (Conservation Element 1994). Communal roosts of this species however have not been recently documented in the Plan area but the communal roosting behavior in natural and man-made (e.g., lemon orchard) habitats outside the Plan area but within the foraging range of the species along the south coast is well known (Personal Communication, UC Santa Barbara Museum of Ecology and Systematics, 2000).

Although there are no recent nesting records for Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) in the Plan area, suitable habitat is present. This species is commonly observed in the spring and summer in the vicinity of Mountain/East Mountain Drive and Coyote Road, which may indicate nesting in the western region of the Plan area. Non-nesting individuals are not formally listed by the federal or state government however nesting Cooper's hawks are listed as Species of Concern by the California Department of Fish and Game.

Less common sensitive passerine species occasionally observed in the Plan area include warbling vireo, yellow warbler, yellow-breasted chat, and American dipper. These species are typically associated with riparian woodland habitats of major and minor creeks in the Plan area. Currently, none of these species is listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal or State government. The yellow warbler and yellow-breasted chat are California Species of Special Concern. Yellow warblers are expected to breed in the denser riparian habitat within the project boundary.

Fish. All streams in the Plan area are considered critical habitat for the anadromous Southern California steelhead trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss*, a federally listed endangered species (*Federal Register* Volume 65 No. 30 February 16, 2000; Volume 62 No. 159 August 18, 1997 respectively). Other species that may be found in coastal streams include stickleback, tidewater goby (at the marine interface in Sycamore Creek), mosquito fish, and arroyo chub.

Tidewater goby, a federally listed endangered species which has recently been proposed for de-listing (*Federal Register* Vol. 64, No. 121, June 24, 1999), has been reported from the lagoon at the mouth of Sycamore Creek (Ambrose 1995). This species has not been reported from marine interface lagoons of other Plan area streams due to unsuitable habitat conditions (e.g., channelization, rock revetment).

Mammals. Sensitive mammal species such as the badger (*Taxidea taxus*) and mountain lion are species of local concern and are present in the less disturbed portions of the Plan area. Several species of bats are federal and state species of special concern and could forage and roost anywhere within the Plan area. The ringtail cat (*Bassariscus astutus*) is an uncommon species associated with remote rocky terrain but could occasionally be found in the Plan area, especially along stream canyons.

4.1.1.5 *Existing Vegetation Fuel Modification Practices*

A substantial amount of native vegetation clearing and/or replacement with landscape species on private properties has been completed over the years. Project conditions of approval issued by the Montecito Fire Protection District on discretionary projects, including new residences or other facilities, encourage removal of chaparral and other native vegetation from habitable structures, rather than vegetation thinning, for fire prevention purposes. Moreover, due to zoning designations on most parcels in the Plan area (which allow for single family dwellings, guest homes, and other ancillary structures on legal parcels) it is not uncommon for substantial vegetation clearing to take place with little or no evaluation of the biological resources prior to construction. An overview of the Plan area from strategic higher elevation points, demonstrates that substantial amounts of native vegetation are being cleared from the foothills, and as development moves further up into the steeper terrain of the foothills, native vegetation is being cleared from increasingly steep and difficult-to-access locations.

4.1.2 Significance Criteria

The proposed Plan would result in a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

- Result in substantial long-term loss of sensitive/native habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants;
- Substantially affect the population of a rare, threatened, or endangered species, including state or federally listed, proposed, or candidate species and CNPS List 1B species, or is

expected to affect the breeding or foraging habitat of such a species resulting in substantially increased mortality or reduced reproductive success.

- Conflict with local, state, or federal plans and policies protecting sensitive species and habitat resources; or

- Interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species.

4.1.3 Project Impacts

The proposed project would potentially impact terrestrial and aquatic biota in the Plan area in several ways. Direct and indirect impacts would potentially occur during and potentially after implementation of fuel load reduction and fire suppression techniques. Vegetation removal or treatment would be repeated regularly (annually in some areas) to maintain clear roadways and minimize the roadside fire hazard. Vegetation treatment would include areas along the Edison powerline service road. Spot application of Phos-Check fire retardants on fine fuels such as dry grasses and weeds would occur in key fire hazard areas along Mountain Drive, upper Park Lane, and Bella Vista Drive, where other vegetation maintenance methods would not be feasible. The proposed removal of substantial amounts of native chaparral and understory riparian vegetation in the Plan area by the MFPD and private property owners, in addition to the application of *Phos-Check* along area roadways as part of fuel modification activities, would have potentially significant impacts for several reasons discussed below.

To the extent that these proposed fuel modification activities achieve the purpose of reducing the likelihood of potential wildfires as well as their intensity and spread within the Plan area, the adverse effects described below would be offset. Although the native vegetation and wildlife communities within the project region have adaptations that allow them to survive or regenerate after wildfires, these abilities are impaired within a partially urbanized area such as the Plan area. This impairment results from a number of factors including abnormal buildup of fuel, partial isolation from populations that can reseed or recolonize the area, and extensive borders with disturbed areas and landscaped areas from which invasive exotic species can spread after a fire.

Impact BIO-1: ***Vegetation removal would potentially affect migratory and resident birds and wildlife as well as their habitats.*** The impact of native vegetation removal and the disturbance associated with hand crews has several implications. Removal of native flora would potentially impact nesting birds, reduce cover and forage for birds and wildlife in undeveloped areas, diminish the continuity of wildlife corridors, and potentially reduce the abundance of sensitive plants. Crews working in natural areas would potentially introduce noise and direct physical disturbance during vegetation management operations. Noise would emanate from chainsaw, chipping machine, and truck use. Noise disturbance and physical disturbance, such as trampling, would potentially cause wildlife to temporarily leave areas in which they would otherwise burrow, nest, take refuge, forage, roost or perch. The impacts of noise and human activity would be short-term and less than significant, except during the nesting season when the activity could cause nest abandonment. Reduction of cover and habitat modification would be a long-term impact. These actions, especially for birds during the breeding/nesting season and aquatic biota during the breeding season, could substantially interfere with the movement of these migratory species, and therefore would be a significant impact on biological resources.

Impact BIO-2: ***Vegetation removal would potentially encourage the establishment and spread of invasive exotic plant species.*** Implementation of the fuel management plan along roadsides, including the Edison powerline service road north of Mountain/East Mountain Drive, has the potential to result in substantial reduction in cover by native woody chaparral shrubs and coastal sage scrub vegetation within the treated area. Removal of woody native vegetation would potentially create conditions favorable for invasion and establishment of weedy plant species. The weedy plant species are opportunistic and are known to establish on denuded soil more quickly than native species in the short-term. Once established, many of the invasive exotic species have the potential to persist on the habitat excluding native vegetation. The combination of bare soil and increased light from thinning or removal of the canopy vegetation, coupled with disturbance to the soil surface associated with crews performing the vegetation modification, lead to favorable conditions for exotic species establishment. This expansion of invasive exotic species at the expense of native perennial vegetation could lead to a substantial long-term loss of this vegetation and degradation of the habitat for native wildlife. This would be a significant impact on biological resources.

Impact BIO-3: ***Vegetation removal in and adjacent to riparian areas would potentially increase erosion, resulting in increased sedimentation and turbidity in creeks.*** The proposed plan would preclude vegetation removal within 50 feet of from the top of a riparian watercourse bank. However, vegetation removal beneath riparian canopy vegetation that extends greater than 50 feet from the riparian watercourse top of bank, or in steeply sloped watersheds, could lead to an increase in erosion, causing turbidity and sediment deposition in creeks during subsequent rainfall events. The resulting degradation of water quality and alteration of habitat would have adverse effects on aquatic biota, including endangered steelhead trout that migrate up area streams and reproduce in favorable years. Therefore, the removal of native vegetation in riparian areas greater than 50 feet from the riparian watercourse top of bank could lead to a substantial long-term degradation of sensitive/native riparian habitat for wildlife and plants. This would be a significant impact on biological resources.

Impact BIO-4: ***Removal of Nuttall's scrub oak would affect the population of this candidate species.*** Vegetation clearing along roadsides and on private properties in the Ladera Lane, Romero Canyon/Creek, and Bella Vista Road area would potentially result in the removal of Nuttall's scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*), a species listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) as "rare and endangered in California and elsewhere" (List 1B). This species is known in the eastern portion of the Plan area, and although not observed during reconnaissance for this project is potentially present in areas that would be treated. Further reductions in the distribution and abundance of this species could substantially affect its population and would be a potentially significant impact. This species and the more common and widespread scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*) are long-lived resprouting species that are relatively fire resistant, when not surrounded by flammable vegetation and ladder fuels, and provide excellent wildlife habitat values.

Impact BIO-5: ***Use of Phos-Check could result in algal blooms that are known to deplete oxygen and cause toxic conditions for aquatic biota, amphibians, and fish.*** Use of *Phos-Check* (a chemical-based fire retardant) along roadsides in steeper areas has the potential to run off into Plan area streams. *Phos-Check* contains 90 percent by weight of the following three chemicals, all of which are sold as chemical fertilizers: diammonium sulfate, monoammonium phosphate, and diammonium phosphate. Due to the retardant's chemical make-up there is the potential for this

material to cause growth of undesirable aquatic plants and algal blooms which are known to deplete oxygen and cause toxic conditions for aquatic biota, amphibians, and fish (i.e., eutrophication). Excessive input of nutrients into the soil also has the potential to create conditions favorable for more growth of weedy grasses during the rainy season following the retardant's application, leading to additional formation of fine fuels along roadsides, and possibly requiring more extensive chemical use during the next fuel maintenance cycle. These activities could result in a substantial long-term alteration or loss of native habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants. These activities would have a significant indirect impact on biological resources.

Impact BIO-6: ***Fuel modification in Eucalyptus stands (e.g., Eucalyptus around drainages) could degrade habitat for Monarch butterflies.*** Fuel modification activities including removal of some types of non-native vegetation (e.g., dead or decadent Eucalyptus tree limbs around drainages) could potentially result in a loss or degradation of sensitive overwintering habitat or nectaring sites for Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*), a potentially significant impact on biological resources.

Impact BIO-7: ***Removal of non-native species would enhance the biological value of riparian corridors and terrestrial habitat areas.*** Removal of non-native species (such as eucalyptus, pepper and acacia trees; Algerian and German ivy; *Vinca; Arundo donax;* yellow star thistle; *Myoporum;* bottlebrush; iceplant; broom; castor bean; Italian thistle, etc.) in conjunction with full fuel vegetation modification would be a potentially beneficial impact on biological resources. If removal and control of these exotic, invasive species were conducted in a manner that prevents their re-invasion and/or spread to other areas, their absence would enhance the biological value of riparian corridors and terrestrial habitat areas and would offset some of the adverse project impacts described above.

4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

Native vegetation clearing on private properties (primarily residential) for fire prevention is a past, present, and foreseeably probable activity affecting biological resources. Requirements to clear 100 feet away from structures has continued to encroach within a variety of habitats, particularly as new and rebuilt residential structures have increased in size. This vegetation clearing is considered a cumulatively significant impact within the Montecito Community Plan area, and is expected to continue into the future as property owners would be required to maintain clear zones throughout the period of occupancy. The proposed Plan would add incrementally to these regional impacts on biological resources. The combined impact of the Plan and Montecito Community Plan buildout would be cumulatively significant, and the project's contribution to this impact would be significant.

4.1.5 Mitigation Measures

The following measures would minimize the proposed Plan's impacts on biological resources:

BIO-1: Practice selective fuel management to minimize removal or clearing of native riparian vegetation (canopy and understory) to the extent feasible. Maintain native vegetation to the maximum extent feasible consistent with fuel modification requirements within a 50-foot buffer zone measured from the landward edge of the riparian tree canopy of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas on the major

watercourses including Sycamore, Cold Springs, Hot Springs, Montecito, San Ysidro, and Romero Creeks. (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

BIO-2: Avoid clearing vegetation (drop & lop, etc.) during the bird breeding and nesting season (February 1 to August 15) in key habitat areas known to support nesting bird species, unless a pre-project survey by a qualified biologist undertaken 3 days prior to the activity determines that avian species are currently not nesting there. The key habitat areas apply to the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas on the major watercourses including Sycamore, Cold Springs, Hot Springs, Montecito, San Ysidro, and Romero creeks and tributaries with riparian habitat dominated by willows, sycamores, or alders. Maintain habitat for nesting birds by maintaining canopy cover of native shrubs and trees in treated areas. If project activities cannot avoid the bird breeding season, active nests should be avoided and provided a buffer as determined by a qualified biologist. Active raptor nests identified during the pre-project surveys will be avoided with a 500-foot buffer zone or as determined by the qualified biologist. (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

BIO-3: Implement the following measures to minimize the long-term impacts of loss of vegetative cover following fuel modification: (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

- Maintain clumps of native species in treated areas to avoid clear cuts.
- Encourage and/or assist property owners to establish native tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant cover in areas of cleared eucalyptus, pepper or acacia trees.
- Encourage and/or assist property owners to establish or restore stable vegetation cover along public roadways using native grassland or understory species.
- Prepare and make available guidelines for establishing stable vegetative cover in fuel management areas that is compatible with native flora and with fuel reduction objectives. Maintain and make available a list of qualified restoration specialists who can assist homeowners in implementing these guidelines.

BIO-4: Avoid removal of oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) and minimize removal of native understory vegetation (including oak seedlings and saplings) from oak woodlands. (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

BIO-5: Minimize the number of personnel working in creeks and creek buffers. Avoid use of heavy equipment in creeks or creek buffers (including at existing road crossings and bridges or culverts). (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

BIO-6: Develop and make available riparian tree and understory restoration guidelines prepared by a qualified restoration specialist and encourage property owners to implement the guidelines following vegetative thinning and removal of non-native plant species. (*Addresses Impact BIO-1*)

BIO-7: Treat weedy plant material in a manner that prevents its reestablishment. This would include removing seed heads and parts capable of resprouting [such as giant

reed (*Arundo donax*) stems and rhizomes] and destroy them by burning or disposing of them offsite in an approved manner (through Santa Barbara County Public Works Solid Waste Division). (*Addresses Impact BIO-2*)

BIO-8: Conduct roadside hazard reduction operations along public roadways (including mowing) in the spring prior to seed set of annual grasses and weeds to the extent practicable. Coordinate roadside hazard reduction activities with County Roads Department. (*Addresses Impact BIO-2*)

BIO-9: Restore stable groundcover along public roadways using native grassland or understory species according to guidelines prepared by a qualified local biologist for establishing stable vegetative cover that is compatible with native flora and with fuel reduction objectives. (*Addresses Impact BIO-2*)

BIO-10: Minimize disturbance of soil or clearing of vegetation in riparian corridors during migratory and breeding season of anadromous fish (November 1 to July 31) in project area streams when streamflow is present. (*Addresses Impact BIO-1 and BIO-3*)

BIO-11: Avoid removal of scrub oaks including Nuttall's scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*) and similar-appearing scrub oaks (*Q. berberidifolia*) wherever feasible consistent with fuel modification objectives. These long-lived species can be left as "specimens" in fuel management areas. These species are likely to be present in the vicinity of Bella Vista Drive, Ladera Lane, and Romero Canyon and along the Edison power line service roads (*Addresses Impact BIO-1 and BIO-4*)

BIO-12: Avoid the use of *Phos-Check* near Plan area streams and culverted road crossings that lead to drainages. Restrict the use of *Phos-Check* to the dry periods of the year (generally July through September) to minimize the potential for the material to be washed into project area streams. (*Addresses Impact BIO-5*)

BIO-13: Monitor growth of annual grasses and weeds in areas treated with *Phos-Check* and compare to growth in similar areas not treated with *Phos-Check*. Modify the use of *Phos-Check* as necessary depending on the results of monitoring. (*Addresses Impact BIO-5*)

BIO-14: Maintain an updated listing and map of Monarch butterfly habitats (i.e,. data compiled by the Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department, or a source recommended by them) and avoid clearing occupied Monarch butterfly habitats and associated forage plants. For recognized clustering sites (e.g., at Ennisbrook) conduct fuel modification activities following County guidelines to the extent feasible consistent with fuel modification requirements. (*Addresses Impact BIO-6*)

BIO-15: Restore native tree and understory cover in areas of cleared eucalyptus following habitat restoration guidelines (see Mitigation Measure BIO-6). (*Addresses Impact BIO-6*)

BIO-16: Preferentially remove non-native invasive species from riparian corridors (e.g., *Vinca major, Arundo donax,* German ivy, Algerian ivy, Italian thistle, wild radish,

nasturtium, smilo grass, arrow weed, *Myporum*, juvenile/sapling eucalyptus trees, fennel, iceplant, tree tobacco, castor bean, mustard, fountain grass, etc.) as part of vegetative thinning. (*Addresses Impact BIO-7*)

BIO-17: Remove giant cane (*Arundo donax*) whenever encountered in treatment areas with the objective of preventing its spread and contribution to a future fire hazard. (*Addresses Impact BIO-7*)

BIO-18: Monitor treated areas and implement appropriate measures to control invasive exotic species including castor bean as part of maintaining treated areas. (*Addresses Impact BIO-7*)

4.1.6 Residual Impacts

The incorporation of mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-18 would reduce to less than significant levels (Class II) the residual impacts of the proposed plan and its contribution to cumulative impacts on biological resources. To the extent that fuel modification activities succeed in diminishing the spread or intensity of wildfires and the establishment of invasive exotic species in riparian corridors by removing them and suppressing them, there would be beneficial impacts that partially offset the adverse impacts described above.

4.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

This section addresses the prehistoric cultural resources within the proposed Plan area. As the plan would not affect existing structures, historical cultural resources are not addressed here (please see section 4.6).

4.2.1 Existing Setting

Prehistoric Background

Archaeological sites found throughout the greater Santa Barbara Channel area collectively paint a picture of changing cultural adaptations through time, particularly with regard to the importance of terrestrial and marine resources. Initial human habitation of the Plan area may have occurred as early as 11,000 years ago although relatively few sites from this time period have been dated successfully. Archaeologists consider that local prehistoric populations increased through time while relying more heavily on the ocean for food, developed sophisticated food-gathering strategies, and increased group cooperation with other tribes throughout Southern California. Shell beads and asphaltum collected on the beaches and tar seeps were traded throughout California for desirable materials such as obsidian (volcanic glass), which was used to make stone hunting tools.

By the time of Spanish contact in the late 18th century, large Chumash villages typically contained numerous dwellings, sweathouses, storehouses, ceremonial areas, and extensive deposits of residential debris, also known as middens. Villages were located near important coastal, estuarine, and riparian habitats (Grant 1978).

The Montecito community area was densely populated by the Chumash because it was particularly desirable due to the plentiful natural resources available (i.e., in creeks, marshes, woodlands, and the ocean). Archaeological sites in this area have been primarily located along creek corridors, along the bluffs near the ocean, and on prominent ridgelines and knolls. Sites within the Plan area have the potential to provide additional information about the subsistence, tool, manufacturing, trade, and social organization of these prehistoric inhabitants, and how they adapted to changing environmental and social factors through time.

Contemporary Native Americans consider all archaeological resources to be important elements of their heritage. Local Chumash are involved in efforts to minimize disturbance to and preserve prehistoric archaeological sites, and are to observe archaeological and construction excavations within these sites retained pursuant to County Cultural Resource Guidelines.

4.2.2 Significance Criteria

The guidelines of CEQA sections 15064.5 and 15126.4 state, a "historical resource" includes the following: a resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4850 et seq.).

A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, shall be presumed to be historically

or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.

Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852) including the following:

A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;

B. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or

D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The fact that a resource is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, not included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code), or identified in an historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code) does not preclude a lead agency from determining that the resource may be an historical resource as defined in Public Resources Code sections 5020.1(j) or 5024.1.

Santa Barbara County Cultural Resource Guidelines provide direction to archaeologists on what types of research questions are appropriate to determine the significance of an archaeological site relative to criterion 3.D.

Criteria for assessing what types of activities would constitute an adverse effect on significant historical resources are identified in CEQA Section 15064.5. A significant impact on historical resources would occur if the proposed project would:

- cause demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the character-defining features of a significant historical resource; or

- cause the loss of integrity, causing a historical resource to lose its significance.

CEQA states that a project will normally have a significant impact if it will:

- disrupt or adversely affect a prehistoric site or property of cultural significance to a community or ethnic or social group.

4.2.3 Project Impacts

Impact CR-1: ***Disturbance of ground surfaces during burning of cut vegetation would have little potential to impact previously unrecorded archaeological site deposits.*** Ground disturbances associated with proposed Plan implementation would be minimal and be carried out by hand. Cut vegetation burning would require minimal ground disturbance. Hand-held tools would be used to clear surface vegetation for burn piles and to create berms on edge of burn pile. Ground disturbance would not exceed a 2-inch depth so that root structures would remain in place. The burn piles be no greater than approximately 60 feet in diameter. Based on the minimal ground disturbance and relatively small areas involved, the potential of substantially impacting the integrity of prehistoric site deposits is low. Burn piles would occur in the foothill region of the Plan area where prehistoric archaeological sites are generally smaller, temporary camps or hunting stations. As these cultural resources are relatively small in size, the likelihood that proposed burn pile ground disturbances would encroach within a particular site is reduced as well. Therefore, the potential for the proposed Plan to result in significant disturbance to prehistoric sites and contemporary Native American heritage values is considered less than significant (Class III).

4.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably probable residential and commercial buildout in the Montecito Community Plan area has and will continue to have significant impacts on prehistoric cultural resources. Grading for house pads and access roads has destroyed the integrity of numerous significant cultural resources. Increased population and recreational use in the vicinity of archaeological sites raises the potential for illicit artifact collection. These cumulative impacts are considered significant. The proposed Plan, however, would not have the potential for substantially contributing to the significant cumulative impact on cultural resources. This contribution would be less than significant (Class III).

4.2.5 Mitigation Measures

The following Plan component would ensure that impacts on cultural resources would remain less than significant.

CR-1: Use only hand-held tools to clear surface vegetation for burn piles and to create clearance on the edge of burn pile. Limit all ground disturbances to a 2-inch depth. (*Addresses Impact CR-1*)

4.2.6 Residual Impacts

With incorporation of the proposed Plan measure CR-1, the residual specific impacts and contribution to cumulative impacts on cultural resources would be less than significant (Class II).

4.3 GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

4.3.1 Existing Setting

Santa Barbara County encompasses a wide diversity of terrain and geologic conditions. The MFPD service boundary extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Santa Ynez Mountain Range. The topography is composed of a broad coastal shelf and alluvial plain that slopes southward from the Santa Ynez Mountains. Elevations within the MFPD range from sea level along the coast to over 3,000 feet further north within the Los Padres National Forest. Here, slopes of greater than 40 percent can be found within the rugged canyons. Exposed soils and sediments from the coast to the mountains trend in east-west directions that parallel the coast.

The coastal plain is primarily underlain by Holocene alluvium, consisting of unconsolidated floodplain deposits of mostly gravel and sand; and Pleistocene older alluvium, consisting of weakly consolidated silt, sand, and gravel. These deposits primarily support grasses rather than brush.

A thin, discontinuous strip of the Sespe Formation is located in the foothill region. The Sespe generally supports a dense growth of brush, although in areas where the Sespe contains a large percentage of clay, it weathers to a loamy soil that supports grasses rather than brush.

North of the Sespe Formation is a fairly continuous outcrop of Coldwater Sandstone. The Coldwater Sandstone is resistant to weathering and erosion and forms some of the most rugged, rocky terrain in the Santa Ynez Mountain Range. This formation is primarily exposed on the south flank of the range, and forms prominent peaks and ridges on which the sandstone crops out as ledges or dip slopes, and siltstone is eroded down to saddles or strike-canyons. The Coldwater Sandstone supports a dense growth of brush.

North of the Coldwater Sandstone is a strip of Cozy Dell Shale. As the Cozy Dell Shale disintegrates into small fragments, it is readily eroded and forms markedly recessive topography in relation to the adjacent sandstone formations. The Cozy Dell Shale supports dense brush.

The County Seismic Safety Element indicated areas of low, moderate, and high slope stability in its geologic problem maps. Most problems are related to development in the steeply sloping foothill areas. According to the Seismic Safety Element maps, the majority of the urban portion of Montecito is identified as an area of moderate slope instability and landslide potential with moderate to high erosion potential as well. Natural erosional processes at these locations can become accelerated in the short-term as a result of grading and brushing activities, and can lead to future slope instability.

4.3.2 Significance Criteria

According to CEQA Guidelines, impacts are considered potentially significant if the proposed development activity, including all proposed mitigation measures, could result in substantially increased erosion, landslides, soil creep, mudslides, or unstable slopes.

The proposed Plan would result in a significant impact on geological resources if it would:

- Contribute substantially to slope instability, and erosion.
- Result in potentially hazardous geologic conditions such as cut slopes exceeding a grade of 1.5 horizontal to 1 vertical.

4.3.3 Project Impacts

Impact GEO-1: ***Excessive disturbance to soil surfaces and root structures would not occur.*** Removal of dead and decadent vegetation as proposed under the Plan would leave root structures in place. Ground disturbances associated with proposed Plan implementation would be minimal and be carried out by hand. Cut vegetation burning would require minimal ground disturbance. Hand-held tools would be used to clear surface vegetation for burn piles and to create clearance on edge of burn pile. Ground disturbance would not exceed a 2-inch depth so that root structures would remain in place. Therefore, excessive disturbance to soil surfaces would not occur. Accelerated erosion along roads or riparian areas, as well as increased sedimentation into nearby creeks, would not result. Although vegetation removal would occur on steep slopes including road cut shoulders, no new grading of ground surfaces would occur. The project would not contribute substantially to slope instability and erosion, and would not result in hazardous geologic conditions such as cut slopes. Therefore, impacts on geologic resources would be less than significant (Class III).

4.3.4 Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably probable residential and commercial buildout in the Montecito Community Plan area has and will continue to have significant impacts on geologic resources. Grading for house pads and access roads, particularly in steeper foothill areas, has resulted at times in slope instability, erosion, and cut slopes. These cumulative impacts are considered significant. The proposed Plan, however, would not have the potential for substantially contributing to the significant cumulative impact on cultural resources. Because the proposed Plan would not result in substantial soil disturbance and an associated increase in soil erosion, the Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.3.5 Mitigation Measures

Because no significant impacts on geologic processes would occur, no mitigation measures are required.

4.3.6 Residual Impacts

The proposed Plan's residual specific impacts and contribution to cumulative impacts on geological resources would be less than significant (Class III).

4.4 VISUAL RESOURCES

The following discussion focuses on the visual resources of the project site, including its community character, open spaces, and its scenic travel corridors.

4.4.1 Existing Setting

Community Character

The community of Montecito has a high level of aesthetic appeal that stems from its physical setting and from the character of its residential development. Important visual resources in the Plan area are shown on Figure 4.4-1. The community is built upon a narrow coastal plain that lies along the ocean with coastal bluffs and is flanked at the interior by the rugged Santa Ynez Mountains. The coastal plain generally extends inland for 2 to 2.5 miles where it typically reaches foothill elevations of 800 feet above sea level. The crests of the mountains are between 4 to 5 miles inland from the coast and reach elevations between 3,200 and 3,800 feet above sea level.

The coastal plain is characterized by gentle slopes steepening gradually towards the foothills and is crossed by a series of relatively straight-coursed streams with steep gradients. These streams, which drain the coast-facing watersheds of the Santa Ynez Mountains, have cut channels across the coastal plain that create a diverse and varied topography.

Montecito is also heavily vegetated with mature trees in both stands and individual specimens. There are numerous areas dominated by clustered stands of native coast valley oaks with their visually appealing branching forms. In some cases, the oak trees lining the roadways create an overlapping canopy extending across both sides of the entire roadway. Taller narrow stretches of lighter colored sycamore trees are located throughout the coastal plain, adjacent to stream courses draining the chaparral-covered Santa Ynez Mountains. Mature non-native pine and eucalyptus woodlands are also interspersed throughout the Plan area, contributing to an appealing woodland tapestry that cloaks the community.

Historically, Montecito was known worldwide as a health resort and was frequented by many wealthy patrons. In the early 20th century, huge estates overlooking the coastal city were built. The pattern of residential land use with large residential lots averaging between 1 to 1.5 acres per house developed within this topographically varied and wooded terrain combines to enhance the semi-rural residential character of the community. Montecito's semi-rural appearance is further enhanced by many of its tree- and hedgerow-lined streets and lanes. These streets generally lack the characteristic concrete curbs, sidewalks, and on-street residential parking typical of California suburbs. The narrow streets wind naturally, showing a respect for the natural terrain. All these factors — topography, vegetation, residential development patterns — create a community character that is both attractive and unique in the region.

Open Space

Montecito is a community rich in visual resources. Low density of development is mixed within an abundance of key open space areas that include a coastline fringed by bluffs of varying heights, four major creeks flanked by towering riparian trees that run through the community, Manning Park, and the rugged mountains of the Los Padres National Forest. The semi-rural character of the

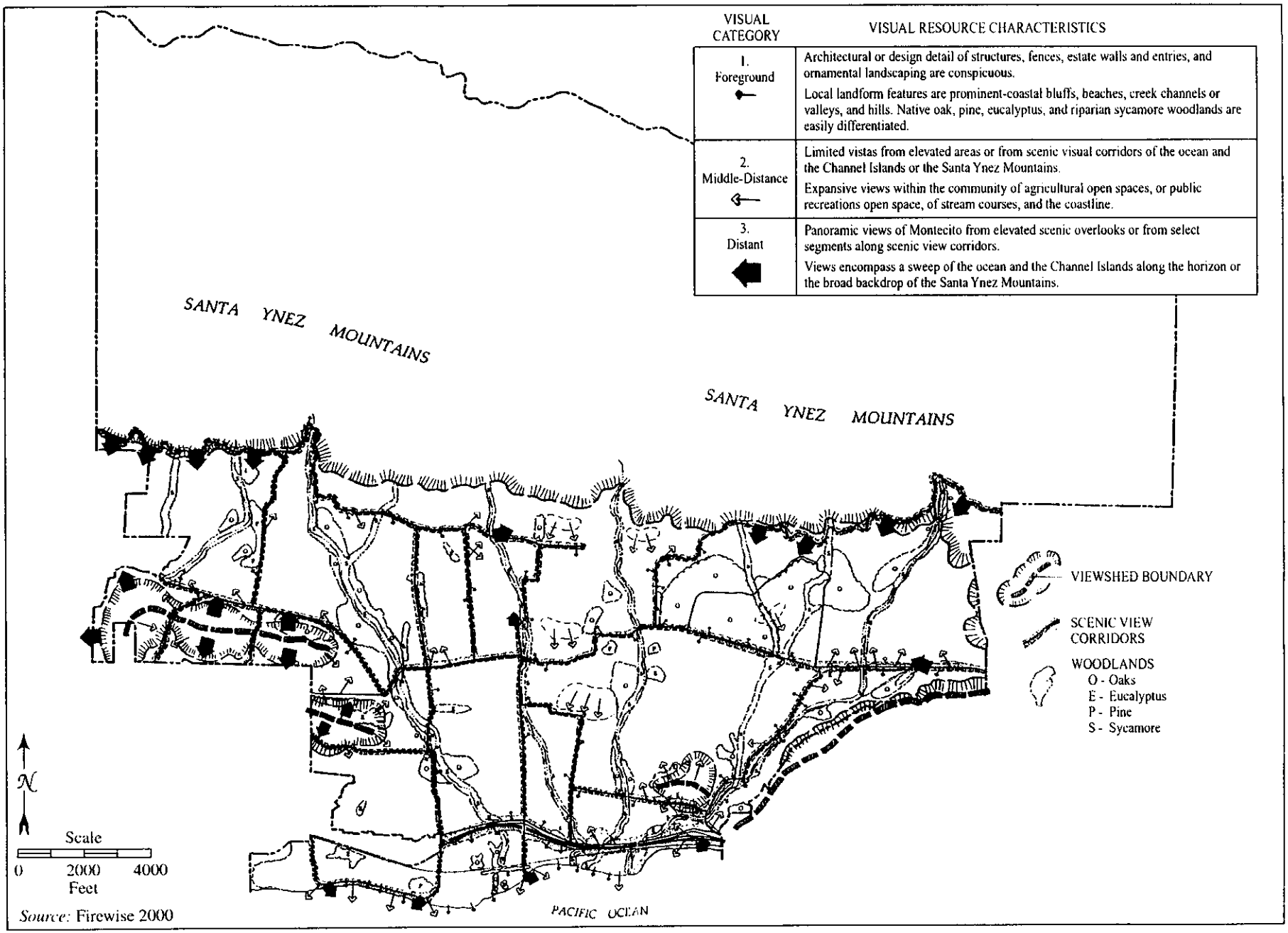

Figure 4.4-1. Visual Resources

community is further enriched by a number of large, private open-space areas, including permanent open-space easements, golf courses, large private grounds, and several blocks of agricultural lands.

Scenic Travel Corridors

The small community of Montecito is located between the Pacific Ocean to the south and the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north. Travel on public roadway within picturesque corridors of the community provides to panoramic and scenic vistas. In some cases, these views are made possible solely by street orientation or roadway elevation. The unique views found within Montecito's gentle sloping coastal plain can sometimes be obstructed by mature vegetation, ornamental landscaping, structures, and even minor differences in local elevation.

The Local Coastal Plan identifies US 101 as a scenic view corridor. A noteworthy segment of this route is the portion descending into Montecito from the Ortega Hill Road summit in Summerland. From this roadway, one can experience expansive views southward to the rocky headlands of Fernald Point, sweeping northerly views across the wooded Montecito urban community, residential development in the foothills, and the Santa Ynez Mountains. Views from US 101 in Montecito are more fleeting, yet provide for and support characteristics of the semi-rural community character. Agricultural orchards on the north side of the freeway between Oak Creek and San Ysidro Creek contribute to the rural perceptions of the community. Agricultural areas are especially conspicuous in views looking northward from the Highway 101 between Oak Creek and San Ysidro Creek, and in northerly and northwesterly views from the eastern end of East Valley Road. Elsewhere, mature vegetation and hedgerows are visual features that both characterize and limit views of nearby residential areas.

The Montecito Community Plan EIR (1992) identified additional roadways that, because of their orientation, changes in elevation, and aesthetic quality of the land uses they traverse, are considered important scenic view corridors. These interior roadways providing visual experiences include the following:

- *Mountain Drive from the western community boundary near Sycamore Canyon easterly to San Ysidro Lane.* From Sycamore Canyon to a little east of Cold Springs Road, Mountain Drive winds along a mountainous front at elevations of between 750 and 850 feet above sea level. Wherever the road winds around spur slopes, one experiences broad, interrupted panoramas encompassing ocean views from the harbor area of Santa Barbara to Summerland. These locations also overlook most of Montecito as well. Traveling along Mountain Drive, east of Cold Springs Road, ocean views diminish as the road winds and descends into Cold Springs Canyon. As the road passes easterly out of the canyon, ocean views re-emerge briefly to be replaced in succession by views of large estates, stone walls, and formal gated entries. At Picacho Road, Mountain Drive has descended to an elevation of 550 feet and it swings away from the mountain front affording easterly panoramic views of the Santa Ynez Mountains and southerly views overlooking Montecito toward Ortega Hill and Summerland.

- *East Valley Road.* East Valley Road descends in elevation from the northern flanks of Ortega Hill as it crosses into Montecito from Summerland. Westerly views from this segment of East Valley Road overlook citrus orchards toward a panoramic backdrop of

the Santa Ynez Mountains. Near Sheffield Drive, East Valley Road is lined with aesthetically appealing mature oaks, creating a tunnel effect. Eucalyptus windrows, stone walls, stands of mature native oaks, and formal gated entries to estates and modest residences all appear along East Valley Road providing a variety of aesthetically appealing roadside views.

- *Barker Pass Road.* In the southwest corner of Montecito, a series of hills cresting near an elevation of 600 feet form a topographic barrier between the Cold Springs School, the Westmont College area, and the coast. Expansive, uninterrupted views of the Santa Ynez Mountains, Montecito Peak, and the Westmont College vicinity are experienced from where Barker Pass Road climbs from Sycamore Canyon Road over these hills to the south. Ocean views are also experienced from the crest of Barker Pass Road southward.

4.4.2 Significance Criteria

The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers may have varying opinions and reactions to changes in a viewshed or the appearance of new buildings and structures. This evaluation compares the existing visual characteristics of the project study area against the potential changes in visual characteristics that could result from the implementation of the proposed project.

The County of Santa Barbara has adopted Visual Aesthetic Impact Guidelines (1994), which provide criteria for determining the potential significance of visual impacts. Key factors in assessing the aesthetic resource of a project site include the physical attributes of the site, its relative visibility, and its relative uniqueness. Significant visual resources, as noted in the Comprehensive Plan Open Space Element, which have aesthetic value include scenic highway corridors; parks and recreational areas; views of coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, watersheds, mountains, and cultural resource sites; and scenic areas. Based on criteria contained in the County's *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (1995), the proposed Plan would result in a significant visual impact if it would result in one or more of the following conditions:

- Development incompatible in appearance with surrounding uses, structures, or the intensity of existing development;
- Create new glare sources that would substantially degrade existing visual conditions, or create light sources that would substantially alter nighttime lighting characteristics of the project area;
- An important visual resource or view would be obstructed;
- Result in a project-specific condition or view, or cumulatively contribute to an existing condition or view, that could be considered to be objectionable or inconsistent with the character of the project site or region.

In this analysis, changes to existing visual conditions were not considered to be significant if the project-related changes would be subordinate to the existing visual environment. Only views available from public viewing locations (such as roadways) were evaluated against the above

significance thresholds. Since County policy and practice does not regulate or mitigate for visual impacts upon private viewsheds, changes to views from private properties were not evaluated as part of the following impact assessment. The Montecito Community Plan policies are stated below.

Policy VIS-M-1.1: Development shall be subordinate to the natural open space characteristics of the mountains.

Policy VIS-M-1.2: Grading required for access roads and site development shall be limited in scope so as to protect the viewshed.

Policy VIS-M-1.3: Development of property should minimize impacts to open space views as seen from public roads and viewpoints.

Policy VIS-M-1.4: In hillsides areas where water tanks are required for structural fire-fighting purposes, tanks should be designed to: 1) blend in with natural land forms; 2) not impinge on the viewshed; and 3) be screened by landscaping.

Policy VIS-M-2.1: Lands which should be preserved in open space for scenic value include road-side turnouts, stream channels, equestrian and hiking trails, and mountainous areas.

Key factors in aesthetic resource evaluation are physical characteristics of the site (e.g., topography, vegetation, proximity to water courses or the ocean, open space) and relative visibility and uniqueness (*Santa Barbara County Thresholds Manual* 1995).

4.4.3 Project Impacts

The removal of dead and decadent vegetation as proposed under the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan would occur primarily in the foothills and lower elevations of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Therefore, no change to views directed southward toward the Pacific Ocean would be affected. Vegetation removal would not result in construction of any new development that would interfere with the visual quality of existing development. Similarly, no new glare or light sources would be created to degrade visual conditions. Vegetation removal would not obstruct views or any important visual resources.

Impact AES-1: ***Removal of dead and decadent vegetation would potentially degrade views of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and foothill areas as experienced from public roadways.*** Removal of dead and decadent vegetation under the proposed Plan would occur within numerous view corridors experienced from public roadways, affecting the scenic character of the region. Proposed vegetation removal maintenance projects that would affect public views of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and foothill areas and affect foreground views, scenic vistas, or panoramic views include the following:

- *Sycamore Canyon (SYC-1)*: This strip of clearing runs north on Cold Springs Road, above Sycamore Canyon Road, loops around and above the homes east of Cold Springs Road and comes back down Cold Springs Creek towards Ashley Road.

- *Sycamore Canyon (SYC-2)*: This area runs from Para Grande Lane in a westerly direction across the Sycamore Canyon riparian zone and connects up with Sycamore Canyon Road and Val Verde Estates.

- *Sycamore Canyon (SYC-3)*: Along State Highway 192/East Valley Road where it crosses Sycamore Canyon, up to where it becomes Sycamore Canyon Road.
- *Sycamore Canyon (SYC-4)*: Begins at the Olive Mill/Hot Springs Road junction and proceeds west along Hot Springs Road for approximately 600 feet.
- *Sycamore Canyon (SYC-5)*: The main access trail located within the Casa Dorinda Open Space Area.
- *Chelham Way Neighborhood Community Program (13)*: Located west of the Chelham Creek and north of Sycamore Canyon Road.
- *Santa Barbara City and Montecito (18)*: Intersection of Sycamore Canyon Road and Coyote Road.

In addition, the following areas where vegetation would be removed fall directly within scenic view corridors:

- *Westmont (1)*: Follows Chelham Creek from West Mountain Drive south.
- *Bella Vista (2)*: Along Bella Vista, from Ladera Lane, east to Romero Canyon Road.
- *Bella Vista (3)*: 2300 Block of Bella Vista Drive
- *Roadside Fire Hazards (6)*: Follows along West Mountain Drive, Park Lane, and Bella Vista Drive.
- *Mountain Drive San Ysidro West (10)*: Area located directly north of San Ysidro Road and borders the Los Padres National Forest Boundary.
- *Coyote Road and Mountain Drive (19)*: In the vicinity of the Coyote Road and West Mountain Drive intersection.

Bridge Safety Clearing (B) projects, located throughout the project area, would remove dead and decadent vegetation adjacent to riparian habitats experienced from roadway bridges.

Selective vegetation removal as described above would not result in defoliation of terrain. The absence of dead and decadent material would be perceived as a thinning of the green blanket of chaparral vegetation through the foothill and mountainous areas, and in the riparian habitats adjacent to bridge crossings. The overall quality of the ground vegetation would be less dense, but would not be inconsistent with the existing visual quality of the area. Areas of thinning would reestablish over time with successive young vegetation, resulting in a continuous revitalization of the visual quality provided by mountainous chaparral habitat, and riparian corridors adjacent to bridge crossings. The Plan's vegetation management would therefore result in adverse but less than significant impacts on visual resources (Class III).

Impact AES-2: ***Use of fire retardants along Mountain Drive, upper Park Lane, and Bella Vista Drive would remove grassy ground cover on roadside shoulder cut slopes, affecting views of foothills.*** Application of Phos-check would serve to inhibit the establishment of invasive weeds

and forbs on roadside shoulder cut slopes along Mountain Drive, upper Park Lane, and Bella Vista Drive. The visual experience of persons travelling on these roadways would be affected. This change would not be substantial, however, as the cut slopes are existing modifications to the native landscape. The indigenous chaparral vegetation has been removed from these areas such that no additional change in the visual character of the native landscape would result. The application of fire retardant would therefore result in adverse but less than significant impacts on visual resources (Class III).

Impact AES-3: ***Trimming of oak tree canopy extending over Bella Vista Drive, Ladera Lane, Sycamore Canyon, the San Ysidro Creek drainage area, and the Romero Canyon area would affect the rural visual character.*** The proposed Plan would include vegetation clearance along several roadways that are critical evacuation routes. Coast live oak overstory currently in some cases overlaps and arches over roadways, including Veloz Drive, Oak Grove Drive, and Alisos Drive, that precludes the ability for fire tracks to effectively pass through. The oak tree canopies are components of the rural visual character. In these instances, canopy would be thinned by selective pruning of tree limbs to a vertical clearance of 13 feet 6 inches over the roadways to allow for access. Above this height, the canopy would not be thinned, and the overall quality of the cascading vegetation would not be substantially affected. The rural canopy character would be thinned, but in no cases would it be removed. Therefore, impacts to the visual character of the rural roadways would be adverse but less than significant (Class III).

4.4.4 Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably probable projects in the Montecito area have and would continue to contribute to increased residential development in the community, affecting its low density rural character. Proposed and pending projects in the Montecito Community Plan Area would also contribute to the loss of open space, additional removal of natural vegetation, obstruction of scenic vistas, add glare or night lighting, and alter the character of natural viewsheds.

Vegetation clearing by private residents occurs as they keep their defensible space zones maintained to acceptable standards. Defensible space is the area between a structure and an on-coming wildland fire, where the native vegetation has been modified to reduce the wildland fire threat. The FIREWISE 2000 report (1998) discussed several examples within the MFPD where clusters of homeowners have collaborated with MFPD resources and have established a community fuel treatment network. A community fuel treatment network is when multiple homeowners or property owners interlink their individual defensible space zones and also treat continuous strips of hazardous fuels in an effort to form a fuel reduction network that abates the fire hazard for that specific area. These areas are not completely cut clear of vegetation surrounding the houses; some vegetation remains, and fuelbreaks are linked together.

The combination of private vegetation removal contributes to the overall change in scenic character and adverse impacts to visual resources. Together with buildout in the Montecito Community Plan area, these incremental, cumulative impacts are considered significant. The proposed Plan, however, would not have the potential for substantially contributing to the significant cumulative impact on visual resources. This contribution would be less than significant (Class III), as removal of dead and decadent vegetation, application of fire retardant of cut slope roadway shoulders, and trimming of tree canopy would not substantially change the existing visual character.

4.4.5 Mitigation Measures

Because no significant impacts on visual resources processes would occur, no mitigation measures are required.

4.4.6 Residual Impacts

The proposed Plan's residual specific impacts and contribution to cumulative impacts on visual resources would be less than significant (Class III).

4.5 NOISE

This section addresses the acoustic resources within the proposed Plan area.

4.5.1 Existing Setting

The rural to semi-rural nature of Montecito provides relatively quiet ambient noise levels. The main external noise sources include periodic trains and vehicular traffic along the U.S. 101 and major roadways. The highest range of existing noise levels within the Montecito area occur along U.S. 101 and the Southern Pacific/Amtrak railroad tracks, with the average weighted exposure exceeding 70 decibels (dB). Levels between 60-64 dB extend from both sides of Hot Springs and San Ysidro Roads, both two-lane major thoroughfares through the city. According to the Montecito Community Plan EIR (92-EIR-03), all properties in the vicinity of these roadway segments are currently experiencing acceptable ambient noise levels.

4.5.2 Significance Criteria

The Santa Barbara County Noise Thresholds (1990) are based on the County Noise Element of the General Plan. The proposed Plan would result in a significant noise impact if it would result in one or more of the following conditions:

- Generate noise levels affect sensitive receptors including residential, medical, recreational, and educational land use outdoor living areas that exceed 65 dB Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL), or indoor living areas that would be subject to noise levels exceeding 45 dB CNEL; or

- Would substantially increase the ambient noise levels for noise sensitive receptors in adjoining areas. This may be presumed when ambient noise levels affecting sensitive receptors are increased to 65 CNEL or more. However, a significant effect may also occur when ambient noise levels affecting sensitive receptors increase substantially but remain less than 65 CNEL, as determined on a case by case basis.

4.5.3 Project Impacts

Impact NOISE-1: ***The proposed project would result in short-term noise impacts affecting outdoor living areas of sensitive residential receptors from the use of chippers and chain saws during vegetation clearing.*** Vegetation clearing would require the use of mechanized equipment that would generate sound levels of up to 95 dBA at 50 feet from the source (USEPA 1971). Since noise from point sources of sound diminishes by 6 dB per doubling of distance from the source, the noise from the mechanized equipment would be reduced to less than 65 dBA only at a distance of 1,600 feet (0.3 mile). It is likely that residences located in the foothills and lower reaches of the Santa Ynez Mountains would be within this distance from vegetation removal crews. Depending upon the orientation of the structure, the landform between the equipment and the residence, and meteorological conditions at the time of the activity, the outdoor living areas of residences within 1,600 feet of proposed vegetation removal activities could be exposed to noise levels exceeding 65 dBA. This would potentially be a short-term, significant impact.

Impact NOISE-2: ***Vegetation removal in any one location would be infrequent and would not substantially increase the ambient noise levels for noise sensitive receptors in adjoining areas over the long-term.*** The short-term nature of vegetation removal activity would be periodic over the course of many years. This use of mechanized equipment in any one activity area would not occur once in approximately 5 years. Because of this infrequent activity, the proposed use of mechanized equipment would not substantially increase the ambient noise levels for noise sensitive receptors in adjoining areas over the long-term. Long-term impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

4.5.4 Cumulative Impacts

Past, present, and reasonably probable residential and commercial buildout in the Montecito Community Plan area has and will continue to have significant impacts on acoustic resources. Reasonably probable projects identified in the Montecito Community Plan EIR would incrementally increase ambient noise levels, particularly during the short-term construction period for individual residences. However, this increase would not be in excess of the long-term County threshold. The proposed Plan would contribute to short-term, periodic, but infrequent noise levels. This incremental short-term impact would be significant.

4.5.5 Mitigation Measures

To minimize the extent of short-term noise impacts to sensitive receptors, the following mitigation measure is required:

NOISE-1: Vegetation removal activities within 1,600 feet of residential receptors shall be limited to the hours between 7 A.M. and 4 P.M. Monday through Friday. Equipment maintenance shall be limited to the same hours.

4.5.6 Residual Impacts

With implementation of the above mitigation measure, the residual Plan specific impacts and contribution to cumulative impacts on noise would be less than significant (Class II).

4.6 LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The proposed Plan would not have the potential to have a substantial adverse environmental impact on several resources. These are summarized below.

4.6.1 Water Resources

Project Impacts

The Montecito Water District (MWD) is responsible for water supply to the community of Montecito. .According to Santa Barbara County, 5,906 acre-feet per year of total water supply is available to the MWD. In 1990, MWD delivered water to approximately 3,200 metered accounts. Due to the nature of residential lots in Montecito with large landscaping, a high per capita demand exists. In addition, 800 acre-feet per year is delivered to agricultural accounts in the MWD.

Water for Montecito includes both surface and groundwater sources. Surface water sources include Lake Cachuma, Jameson Lake, Fox and Alder creeks and the MWD's 3,000 acre-foot per year (AFY) entitlement of State Water. The MWD's current demand in conjunction with that of approved projects and existing legal lots does not exceed the available water supply.

The proposed Plan would not result in additional water demands. No new firefighting infrastructure would be constructed. Plan implementation would reduce the potential for intense wild fires and property damage. This preventative action would potentially reduce the amount of water required in future fire fighting activities. Therefore, the proposed Plan would have a beneficial impact on water resources (Class IV).

Cumulative Impacts

Buildout of the Montecito Community plan would result in a short-term deficit of the MWD's total supply, although there is an exiting water surplus. However, the proposed Plan's contribution to cumulative impacts would be beneficial (Class IV).

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan's impacts on water resources would be beneficial, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.2 Transportation/Circulation

Project Impacts

U.S. 101 and a number of two-lane major roadways run through the area. These include East Valley Road, Sycamore Canyon Road, Hot Springs Road, and San Ysidro Road. The rural nature of the community provides for an unusual roadway system. Many roads do not meet current typical County standards of 12-foot lanes and a 5-foot paved shoulder. Many of the roads are intersected by service numerous residential driveways, narrow, and/or winding.

The proposed Plan would not require increased employment or vehicle use. Vegetation removal would be done by existing MFPD crews, private contractors, or Santa Barbara County Public Works

Department, Roads and Transportation Division. The number of additional average daily trips resulting from this maintenance activity would be extremely few in relation to the existing roadway capacity. This activity would be periodic and short-term. In addition, the proposed project would not require any large earthmoving equipment for vegetation removal, so that potential obstruction of narrow/winding roadways would not occur. Therefore, the proposed Plan's impact on transportation and circulation would be minimal, and adverse but less than significant (Class III)

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative traffic volumes consist of regional growth, traffic generated by related projects, and project-generated traffic added to existing traffic volumes. Given the isolated nature of the community and its circulation system, Montecito Community Plan buildout would not have a significant cumulative impact on roadways such as Coast Village Road and State Route 192. Cumulative impacts on traffic and circulation would be considered less than significant, and the proposed Plan's contribution to this cumulative development would be less than significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan's impacts on transportation would be less than significant, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.3 Air Quality

Project Impacts

Montecito is located within the South Central Coast Air Basin (SCCAB). The basin includes all of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. The Santa Ynez Mountains separate Santa Barbara County into North and South and acts as a partial barrier to the exchange of air. Montecito is located in the South County Region. Historically, air quality in Santa Barbara County has exceeded or violated California or national health standards for three pollutants: ozone (O_3), inhalable particulate matter (PM_{10}), and hydrogen sulfide (H_2S). The County is currently classified as "nonattainment" for the state O_3 and PM_{10} standards and the national O_3 standard. The primary ambient air quality problem in the County is O_3. Monitoring stations that measure air quality in the County are located in Carpinteria and downtown Santa Barbara. Data from both stations show that air quality is improving.

The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) regulates stationary sources of air pollution in the County and sets guidelines to determine the significance of air quality impacts for CEQA purposes.

The proposed project would involve pile or windrow burning in selected areas where vegetation is cleared. The MFPD is required to submit a burn plan to APCD, for each burning activity prior to the project's implementation. This would ensure that pile or windrow burning would only occur on designated burn days. Discussions with APCD staff (Ron Tan and Vijaya Jammalamadaka, personal communication 2000) indicate that this periodic burning activity, due to the relatively small amounts of fuel consumed and periods of time, would result in minimal, short term, adverse but less than significant impacts on air quality (Class III).

Cumulative Impacts

Both long and short-term emissions from surrounding communities would combine with Montecito's emissions to create cumulatively significant impacts on local and Basin-wide air quality. However, the proposed Plan's contribution to air quality impacts would be considered minimal and cumulative impacts would remain less than significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan's impacts on air quality would be adverse but less than significant, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.4 Historic Resources

Project Impacts

The proposed Plan would only involve removal of dead and decadent vegetation. No structures, including potentially historic resources, would be affected. No impact on historic resources would result.

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable projects that lead to the loss of known and unknown historical structures within the area would be cumulatively significant due to the information those structures could contribute to further understanding of the region's history. The proposed project would not contribute to any cumulative impacts on historic resources. Although cumulative impacts on historic resources would be significant, the proposed Plan would have no contribution.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would have no impact on historic resources, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.5 Land Use

Project Impacts

Land use within the community of Montecito consists of three geographic areas: the coastal zone, the urban area and the rural area. The coastal zone is primarily single family and duplex residential lots with some visitor-serving commercial uses. The urban area contains exclusive one-acre residential estate lots along with other educational, government, institutional, recreation, and neighborhood commercial uses. These include Westmont College, Montecito Union School, the Fire Department, YMCA, Manning Park, and the Montecito Village.

The proposed Plan's removal of dead and decadent vegetation removal would not result in any incompatibilities with surrounding land uses. Therefore, no impact on land use would result.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts on land use in the Montecito Community EIR were determined to be less than significant. Existing and future land uses of the surrounding areas would only be affected by growth inducing impacts. The proposed Plan would not contribute any cumulative impacts on land use and impacts would be considered less than significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would have no impacts on land use, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.6 Public Facilities

Project Impacts

Channel Disposal is contracted with the County of Santa Barbara to collect solid waste from Montecito to haul it to either the County Transfer Station or Tajiguas Landfill. The proposed Plan would increase quantities of dead and decadent vegetation. The removed vegetation would not require disposal in a landfill, as it would be either chipped on site and the chipped biomass applied back to the project site, or burned. Therefore, the proposed Plan would not have any adverse effect on landfill facilities. No other impacts on facilities such as police protection and schools would occur. The removal of dead and decadent vegetation would reduce the potential intensity of wildland fires and property damage. The effect on fire protection service would be beneficial (Class IV).

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable projects including residential buildout identified in the Montecito Community Plan EIR would place additional demands on public facilities including police protection, schools, and solid waste. This would be a cumulative significant impact. The proposed Plan would not contribute to this cumulative significant impact, and would lessen the effect on fire protection.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would have only beneficial effects on public services, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.7 Energy

Project Impacts

Electrical services are provided to the area by Southern California Edison (SCE), and gas by the Southern California Gas Company. Removal of dead and decadent vegetation under the proposed Plan would not increase the demand on electrical of gas supplies or require the development or extension of new sources of energy. No impacts on energy would result.

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable development in the Montecito Area would increase demands on energy. This cumulative impact is less than significant, given sufficient energy capacity provided by public utilities. The proposed Plan would not contribute to this less than significant cumulative impact on energy.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would not have any impact on energy, no mitigation measures would be required.

4.6.8 Fire Protection

Project Impacts

Fire protection services are provided by the Montecito Fire Protection District (MFPD), which operates two fire stations at 595 San Ysidro Road and 2300 Sycamore Canyon Road. The MFPD is a special district funded primarily through property taxes. The MFPD service boundaries are shown in Figure 2-2, and high fire hazard areas are shown in Figure 4.6-1.

The first priority of the Montecito Fire Department is to protect public lives and maintain fire fighter safety. Protection of structures is the next priority. This is quickly becoming a complex problem due to more residential development, especially deeper into the mountain areas covered by highly flammable chaparral vegetation. The third priority for the District is the protection of sensitive, natural, cultural, and archeological resources.

The proposed Plan would implement a wildland fuels modification program. This would be the most effective approach in helping maintain the priorities of the District. The vegetation removal activities would be a beneficial impact on fire protection (Class IV).

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable development and buildout in the Montecito Community Plan Area, particularly in the foothill and mountainous areas, would continue to add pressures on the ability for the MFPD to response to multiple fires. This incremental development would have a significant cumulative impact on fire protection. The proposed Plan would reduce the potential intensity of wildland fires by eliminating dead and decadent vegetation throughout the MFPD service area. Therefore, the proposed Plan would have a beneficial contribution to cumulative impacts.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would a beneficial effect on fire protection, no mitigation measures would be required.

4.6.9 Recreation

Project Impacts

Montecito is home to an extensive trail system for walking, hiking, bike riding, and horseback riding. A number of trails connect the upper Los Padres with the Pacific Ocean. The County Park Department maintains trails with help from the Montecito Trails Foundation.

No trails would be closed as a result of the proposed project. Should any work be located adjacent to public trails MFPD should contact either Montecito Trails Foundation or County Park Department before proceeding with any vegetation removal.

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable development and buildout in the Montecito Community Plan Area would place additional demands on recreation, but would not result in the need for additional recreational facilities, including parks, trails, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, coastal access, and open space, in order to meet the minimum standard ratio of 4.7 acres of recreation/open space per 1,000 people as established in the County Land Use Element. The cumulative impact would be less than significant, and the proposed Plan would not contribute to this effect.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would not have any impact on recreation, no mitigation measures are required.

4.6.10 Housing

Project Impacts

Proposed Plan vegetation removal would not affect any structures, including existing affordable dwellings; no current residents would be displaced. Therefore, the proposed Plan would not have any impacts on housing.

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable development and buildout in the Montecito Community Plan Area would result in cumulative impacts to housing that would be potentially significant. However, the proposed Plan would not have any contribution to these impacts.

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan would not have any impact on housing, no mitigation measures are required.

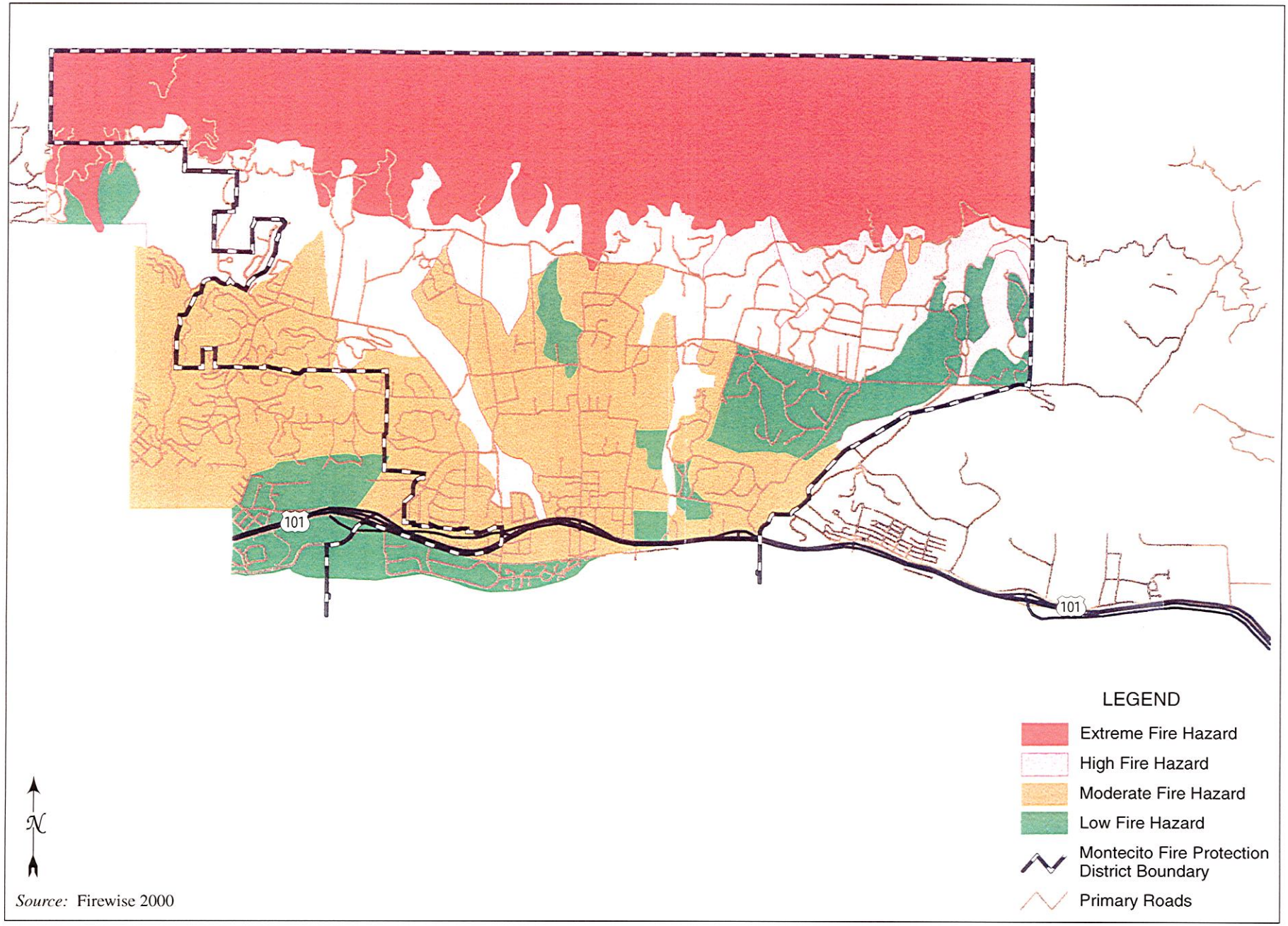

Figure 4.6-1. Fire Hazard Map

4.6.11 Risk of Upset

Project Impacts

The proposed Plan would involve the continued use of chemical fire retardants including Phos-check. The storage and application of the chemical would be carried out in strict accordance with manufacturer's specifications. The MFPD maintains a controlled storage facility operated under a Hazardous Materials Business Plan that ensures proper accidental chemical spill containment and emergency response protocol. Therefore, use of the fire retardants would have a less than significant risk of upset impact (Class III).

Cumulative Impacts

Reasonably probable development and buildout in the Montecito Community Plan Area would not significantly increase cumulative impacts to risk of upset. The proposed Plan's contribution to this incremental impact would also be less than significant (Class III).

Mitigation Measures

Because the proposed Plan's risk of upset impact would be less than significant, no mitigation measures are required.

5.0 PLANS AND POLICIES

Requirement	*Discussion*
Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan	
Hillside and Watershed Protection Policies/LCP Policies 3-13 to 3-22: *Nine policies intended to guide development on hillsides and within watersheds are specified in the Land Use Element. These policies call for minimizing cut and fill, fitting development to the site topography, soils, geology, hydrology and other natural features, and specifying techniques for minimizing the effects of necessary grading.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would remove dead and decadent brush within high fire hazard areas. However, the root systems would not be removed and would remain intact, minimizing soil disturbance and erosion hazards. Therefore, the proposed plan would be consistent with this policy.
Streams and Creeks Policies/LCP policies 9-37 through 9-43: *All permitted construction and grading within stream corridors shall be carried our in such a manner as to minimize impacts from increased runoff, sedimentation, biochemical degradation, or thermal pollution. These policies are directed at regulation of development within stream corridors including the establishment of buffers, limits on grading, runoff, and sedimentation, and prohibitions on the installation of septic systems and concrete channelization.*	**Consistent.** Removal of dead and decadent would not occur within stream corridors. Vegetation removal beneath riparian canopy vegetation or in steeply sloped watersheds could lead to an increase in erosion, causing turbidity and sediment deposition in creeks during subsequent rainfall events. Incorporation of Mitigation Measure BIO-10, minimize disturbance of soil or clearing of vegetation in riparian corridors during migratory and breeding season of anadromous fish (November 1 to July 31) in project area streams when streamflow is present, would ensure consistency with this policy.
Historical and Archaeological Sites Policies/LCP Policies 10-1 through 10-5: *These policies establish criteria for mitigation of potential impacts to historical and archaeological sites.*	**Consistent.** Potential ground disturbances would be limited to clearing burn pile areas and would not exceed 2-inches deep. This activity would result in adverse, but less than significant impacts on prehistoric cultural resources. No impacts to structures, including historic resources, would occur.
Conservation Element	
In Coast Live Oak forests, urbanization, expansion of agriculture, and moderate or heavy recreational use should not be allowed. A natural park would be desirable.	**Consistent.** No oaks would be removed as a result of the proposed plan. Only pruning of oaks would occur during vegetation thinning activities.
Around trees serving as traditional roosting sites for butterflies, a 100-foot wide buffer should be established for protection of this species.	**Consistent.** Monarch butterfly habitats would be identified and the proposed plan would avoid clearing habitats and associate forage plants.

Requirement	*Discussion*
Noise Element	
Policy 1: *In the planning of land use, 65 dB Day-Night Average Sound level should be regarded as the maximum exterior noise exposure compatible with noise sensitive uses unless noise mitigation features are included in project designs.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would result in short-term noise impacts. Noise would be generated through the use of chippers and chain saws during vegetation clearing and affect residential receptors. Implementation of Mitigation Measure NOISE-1 would limit equipment usage to weekday work hours and result I consistency with this policy.
Open Space Element	
Steep slopes which occur in the northern portion of the study area, are important open spaces because of concerns about landslides, erosion, and fire.	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would not alter the topography of steep slopes in the Plan area, or contribute to landslides or erosion. The Plan would reduce the intensity of wildfires and minimize subsequent erosion and runoff during the rainy season. Therefore, the proposed plan would be consistent with this policy.
Santa Barbara County Local Coastal Plan	
Policy 2-11: *All development adjacent to areas designated as environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be regulated including setbacks, buffer zones, grading controls, maintenance, etc.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would avoid clearing native riparian vegetation and maintain native vegetation adjacent to creeks, including a 50-foot buffer.
Montecito Community Plan	
Policy AQ-M-1.3: *Air pollution emissions from new development and associated construction activities shall be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. These activities shall be consistent with the Air Quality Attainment Plan and Air Pollution Control District guidelines.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would involve pile or windrow burning in selected areas where vegetation is cleared. The MFPD would submit a burn plan to APCD, prior to each vegetation removal project, for the windrow and pile burnings only on designated burn days. This would ensure consistency with this policy.

Requirement	*Discussion*
Montecito Community Plan	
Policy BIO-M-1.1: *Designate and provide protection to important or sensitive environmental resources and habitats in the inland portion of the Montecito Planning Area.* **Policy BIO-M-1.2:** *The following biological resources and habitats shall be identified as environmentally sensitive and shall be protected and preserved to the extent feasible through the Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) overlay:* • *Riparian woodland corridors* • *Monarch butterfly roosts* • *Sensitive native flora* • *Coastal sage scrub* **Policy BIO-M-1.3:** *Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH) areas within the Montecito Planning Area shall be protected, and where appropriate, enhanced.* **Policy BIO-M-1.4:** *Monarch Butterfly roosting habitats shall be preserved and protected.* **Policy BIO-M-1.5:** *Trimming or clearing of vegetation within 50' of a known Monarch Butterfly Habitat or along riparian habitats shall not occur without the review and the approval of the Resource Management Department.*	**Consistent.** Protection to environmentally sensitive resources and habitats would be included with the proposed plan. Removal of dead and decadent vegetation would exclude native riparian vegetation and maintain native vegetation adjacent to creeks. Disturbance of soil or clearing of vegetation in riparian corridors during migratory and breeding season of anadromous fish would be minimized. In addition, riparian understory restoration guidelines would be provided to property owners. An updated listing and map of Monarch butterfly habitats would be maintained and clearing would be avoided within those designated areas.
Policy BIO-M-1.6: *Riparian vegetation shall be protected as part of a stream or creek buffer. Where riparian vegetation has previously been removed, (except for channel cleaning necessary for free-flowing conditions as determined by the County Flood Control District) the buffer shall allow the reestablishment of riparian vegetation to its prior extent to the greatest degree possible. Restoration of degraded riparian areas to their former state shall be encouraged.*	**Consistent.** Only dead and decadent vegetation would be removed from riparian corridors. This would allow for natural re-establishment of riparian vegetation.

Requirement	*Discussion*
Montecito Community Plan	
Policy BIO-M-1.15: *To the maximum extent feasible, specimen trees shall be preserved. Specimen trees are defined for the purposes of this policy as mature trees that are healthy and structurally sound and have grown into the natural stature particular to the species. Native or non-native trees that have unusual scenic or aesthetic quality, have important historic value, or are unique due to species type or location shall be preserved to the maximum extent feasible.* **Policy BIO-M-1.16:** *All existing native trees regardless of size that have biological value shall be preserved to the maximum extent feasible.* **Policy BIO-M-1.17**: *Oak trees, because they are particularly sensitive to environmental conditions, shall be protected to the maximum extent feasible. All land use activities, including agriculture shall be carried out in such a manner as to avoid damage to native oak trees. Regeneration of oak trees shall be encouraged.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would avoid removal of oak trees and minimize removal of native understory vegetation from oak woodlands. No trees would be completely removed as a result of the proposed plan.
Policy BIO-M-1.20: *Pollution of streams, sloughs, drainage channels, underground water basins, estuaries, the ocean and areas adjacent to such waters shall be minimized.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would minimize the use of Phos-check near project area streams and culverted road crossings that lead to drainages and restrict the use of Phos-check to the dry periods of the year. In addition, the use of heavy equipment in creeks or within creek buffers would be minimized.
Policy CR-M-2.1: *Significant cultural, archaeological, and historic resources in the Montecito area shall be protected and preserved to the extent feasible.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would use only hand tools to clear surface vegetation for burn piles and limit soil disturbance for berming on edge of burn pile to two inches. Therefore, the potential to impact previously unrecorded archaeological site deposits would be minimized and the proposed plan would be consistent with this policy.
Policy F-M-2.1: *The County shall cooperate with the Montecito Fire Protection District while reviewing Fire District requirements applied to ministerial and discretionary development projects regarding access, vegetation clearance, and improvements with the intent of protecting development from fire hazards while maintaining community character and quality of life and preventing adverse environmental impacts.*	**Consistent.** The proposed plan would be a beneficial impact with regards to reducing fire hazards in the Montecito area while avoiding significant environmental impacts.
Policy F1-M-1.1: *In order to prevent hillside erosion, removal of vegetation on slopes 20 percent or greater shall be limited to that necessary for fire protection and for reasonable development of the parcel.*	**Consistent.** Vegetation removal would not include removing the root structures therefore erosional impacts would be reduced in all areas including hillsides.

Requirement	*Discussion*
Montecito Community Plan	
Policy N-M-1.1: *Noise-sensitive uses (i.e., residential and lodging facilities, educational facilities, public meeting places and others specified in the Noise Element) shall be protected from significant noise impacts.*	**Consistent.** Vegetation removal activities within 1,600 feet of residential receptors would be limited to the hours between 7 A.M. and 4 P.M. Monday through Friday. Equipment maintenance would be limited to the same hours.
Policy VIS-M-1.1: *Development shall be subordinate to the natural open space characteristics of the mountains.* **Policy VIS-M-1.2:** *Grading required for access roads and site development shall be limited in scope so as to protect the viewshed.* **Policy VIS-M-2.1:** *Lands which should be preserved in open space for scenic value include road-side turnouts, stream channels, equestrian and hiking trails, and mountainous areas.*	**Consistent.** Selective vegetation removal as described above would not result in defoliation of terrain. The absence of dead and decadent material would be perceived as a thinning of the green blanket of chaparral vegetation through the foothill and mountainous areas, and in the riparian habitats adjacent to bridge crossings. The overall quality of the ground vegetation less dense, but would not be inconsistent with the existing visual quality of the area. The visual experience of persons travelling on roadways would be affected. This change would not be substantial, however, as the cut slopes are existing modifications to the native landscape. The oak tree canopies located on roads throughout Montecito are components of the rural visual character. The rural canopy character in the area would be thinned, but in no cases would it be removed and scenic visual character would be preserved.

6.0 ALTERNATIVES

EIRs are required to examine alternatives to a proposed project including a "No Project" alternative. The intent of this examination is to explore a reasonable range of different projects that meet most of the basic objectives of the proposed project, while reducing the severity of project environmental impacts. *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15126(d)(1) notes that "the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly." If there is an "environmentally superior" alternative to the proposed project, it must be identified. If the environmentally superior alternative is the No-Project Alternative, the EIR must identify an additional "environmentally superior" choice among the other project alternatives analyzed.

6.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED

The MFPD considered several alternatives in developing the proposed Plan. Several alternatives were subsequently eliminated from consideration in this EIR, as they would result in greater environmental impact, would be prohibitively costly, or would not be acceptable to the public, such that widespread Plan implementation would be infeasible. These alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis are discussed below.

6.1.1 More Extensive Vegetative Clearance Ordinance and Enforcement Program

This alternative would have enacted a more extensive brush-clearing ordinance requiring the clearing of flammable vegetation up to 200 feet away from all structures, including the removal of many ornamental landscaping species. In addition, this alternative would make it a violation to have or plant any highly flammable landscaping tree species such as eucalyptus, junipers, and pines.

Vegetation removal along roadways would also be a major component of this enforcement and ordinance program. All public and private roads would be required to meet new and improved clearance requirements. Private driveways would also be included in this program.

Mandatory enforcement would occur under this alternative. The MFPD would employ additional employees to provide sufficient enforcement authority to ensure all properties within the District would be in compliance.

Environmental concerns associated with the alternative would include lack of potential oversight of vegetation mitigation and clearance undertaken by individual property owners. Property owners commonly use the least expensive vegetation clearance methods, which are often not the most environmentally sensitive. In addition, inadvertent impacts to riparian areas would potentially occur due to the lack of alternative program measures to protect sensitive resources and habitats.

Due to the potential for increased environmental impacts on biological resources, this alternative is eliminated from further consideration.

6.1.2 Goat Grazing

Goats are used for vegetation maintenance in several areas in California with relatively good success. Unfortunately, because goats seldom eat old and decadent brush, the objective of the proposed vegetation clearance program would not be achieved. Additionally, use of goats would represent logistical challenges. The animals would need 24-hour protection from natural predators such as coyotes. They would also need to be herded to ensure that they would not graze in environmentally sensitive habitats or inadvertently enter private landscaped areas such as a garden.

Goats would also need supplemental feeding, because the volume of brush would not be sufficient to provide for graze alone. Great care would have to be taken to make sure no invasive species would be accidentally introduced into the supplemental feed (such as alfalfa) that would be subsequently propagated by goat feces. Goat herders would need a local residence such as a trailer at the project site, requiring water and sanitation needs. Also, visual impacts would result from the unsightly look of a goat camp.

Due to the extensive logistical difficulties in supporting a goat herd for brush removal, this alternative is eliminated from further consideration.

6.1.3 Heavy Mechanical Equipment

Several types of heavy mechanical equipment can be used to carry out large fuel mitigation projects and fuel breaks. The U. S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry, and Santa Barbara County Fire Department use heavy mechanized equipment including bulldozers with a dozer blade, pull plows, or large drums to crush or remove flammable vegetation.

Use of mechanical equipment would result in numerous environmental impacts greater than projected for the proposed project. The larger means of vegetation clearance would not allow for selective removal of dead and decadent vegetation found within a mosaic of healthy chaparral vegetation. Therefore, this alternative would result in much more extensive impacts on biological resources by removing swaths of habitat. Impacts on geological resources including increased erosion and subsequent sedimentation in drainages would result from blading surface soils. Heavy equipment would result in increased noise, air quality, and transportation impacts. The resulting areas with bladed or crushed vegetation would also potentially result in greater aesthetic impacts, depending on their location relative to public view corridors.

Due to the increased severity of environmental impacts associated with the scale of vegetation clearance, this alternative is eliminated from further consideration.

6.1.4 Increased Brushing Setbacks from Structural Development

This alternative would increase the existing buffer between any structural development and adjacent vegetation from the current standard of 100 feet to a distance that would eliminate the need to remove any additional decadent vegetation.

This alternative would not be capable of achieving the project's objectives for several reasons: (1) the Montecito Fire Protection District service area is already substantially built out such that removal of vegetation in the proximity of existing structures is essential to fire prevention; and (2) avoidance of any vegetation removal in the chaparral vegetation areas would not achieve the proposed project objectives of reducing the fuel loads and flammability in these heavily vegetated areas.

Because none of the proposed project objectives would be met under this alternative, it is eliminated from further consideration.

6.1.5 Additional Fire Code Requirements

This alternative would require more restrictive building materials and fire-resistant design features as components of a revised Fire Code, potentially resulting in the ability to reduce vegetation removal requirements in surrounding chaparral areas.

This alternative would be infeasible because the MFPD already maintains extremely progressive building material constraints and Class A roofing requirements. These are the most restrictive requirements defined and were implemented in the MFPD area over the past 24 years, one of the first fire districts in California to do so. The current building standards do not provide for reasonable opportunities to increase fire-resistant design features use requirements, or to restrict the use of building materials without unacceptably reducing architectural flexibility. For example, an additional component that has not previously been required by the District are fire-proof window shutters. Given the diversity in architectural styles and tastes in the Montecito Planning Area, it is highly unlikely that these shutters could be imposed as a standard building requirement. Furthermore, any more stringent building standards would afford only marginal improvements in fire prevention over what is currently required.

Because the alternative would not be feasibly implemented, it is eliminated from further consideration.

6.2 NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Project alternative, no reduction of fuel loads in heavily vegetated areas would occur except for the ongoing and existing fuel maintenance as identified in Table 2-1. No additional adverse impacts on biological resources, cultural resources, geological resources, visual resources, and noise would occur. No beneficial aspects of the proposed project, such as reduced intensity of wildfires. The potential of extraordinary environmental damage due to intense wildfire within largely unmitigated vegetation only increases with time and the lack of mitigation and fuel management.

This alternative would not be capable of achieving most of the project's objectives of managing dead and decadent vegetation that can serve to increase the intensity and extent of fire.

6.3 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

This alternative would incorporate mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-18 identified in section 4.1.5, NOISE-1 identified in section 4.5.5, and CR-1 in section 4.2.5 of the EIR to

minimize potential impacts on biological resources, noise, and cultural resources respectively. In addition, the alternative would include the following components:

- No Bridge Safety Clearing within the Coastal Zone would occur. Two crossings on Sheffield Drive would not be included in the Plan.

- The vegetation reduction project supervisor and crew working in ESH areas would attend a pre-project field meeting with a qualified biologist at the vegetation reduction project area to discuss and document proposed clearing methods and procedures. The biologist would provide direction identifying the extent to which decadent vegetation could be feasibly cleared without adversely affecting the integrity of the ESH habitat. The biologist would briefly field check during and at the conclusion of vegetation reduction activity to ensure compliance with the previously approved clearing methods and procedures.

- All decadent material subject to thinning, pruning, and limbing would potentially be mechanically chipped and then further reduced in bulk by processing in a mechanical shredder. The resulting mulched material would then be rebroadcast on the ground surface in the original area where the decadent removal had been removed. The chipper would be moved around as work occurs. Actual placement of the chipper would depend on the ability to minimize the distance vegetation would need to be hauled to the chipper. The majority of the time, the chipper would be along paved roads or driveways. It would never be placed within sensitive habitat areas. Refueling of the chipper would occur outside riparian corridors and only on paved roads. The resulting mulch is expected to retard erosion and exotic species establishment as well as being beneficial to the soil.

- Chipping, shredding, and redistribution of mulch from removed decadent material would be implemented in all ESH areas. The chipped and shredded material would be redistributed on the sites from which the material would be originally removed.

- Avoid mowing areas of predominantly native perennial grass ground cover locations. Non-native annual grasses would be mowed during the spring prior the period when their seed ripens. Depending on the precipitation in the spring, this mowing could occur later in the year, but would avoid all native perennial grasses.

- Phos-check fire retardant would not be used in this alternative.

- Burning, where feasible, to involve only cut and cured vegetation arranged in vertical windrows (perpendicular to topographic contours) rather than in horizontal windrows (parallel to the topographic contours).

- Large diameter fuels (greater than 4") would remain.

The proposed alternative would have the following impacts on environmental resources:

Biological Resources: The incorporation of mitigation measures BIO-1 through BIO-18, where applicable, would reduce impacts on biological resources to less than significant levels.

Meetings at the project area with a qualified biologist prior to work in ESH areas, with follow up visits during and after the work would help minimize adverse effects and maximize beneficial effects (such as removal of exotic species) of fuel management activities. Shredding cut materials and reapplying them as mulch to the slopes from which the materials would be removed would provide protection of the soil surface from erosion and would inhibit establishment of exotic grasses and weeds. Conducting roadside mowing prior to the development of seed by annual grasses and weeds would facilitate the spread of natives which develop their seed later in the season. Leaving large diameter fuels in place would ensure that major structural elements of the vegetation remain and would leave in place valuable cover for wildlife. The resulting impact on biological resources would be less than, or superior to, the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, the ability of fuel modification activities to diminish the spread or intensity of wildfires and the establishment of invasive exotic species in riparian corridors by removing them and suppressing them would result in beneficial impacts on biological resources.

Cultural Resources: Similar to the proposed project, the alternative would restrict vegetation removal to hand tool use only with no deeper than 2 inches of soil disturbance. The alternative would therefore ensure that impacts on cultural resources would be adverse but not significant. This impact on cultural resources would be equal to the proposed project.

Geologic Resources: This alternative, like the proposed project, would have less than significant impacts on geologic resources as no soil below the root zone would be removed during vegetation removal. Aligning burn piles in a vertical (perpendicular) orientation to the slope rather than in a horizontal (parallel) orientation to the slope would substantially reduce the amount of soil necessary to be moved for creation of the shallow trench at the base of the burn pile windrow. The resulting impact on geologic resources would be less than, or superior to, the proposed project.

Visual Resources: This alternative, like the proposed project, would have less than significant impacts on visual resources as removal of dead and decadent vegetation and trimming of tree canopy would not substantially change the existing visual character. Avoiding the use of chemical retardants would not necessarily result in less impacts on visual resources, as brushing of weedy vegetation alongside road shoulders would still occur. This impact on visual resources would be equal to the proposed project.

Noise: By incorporating mitigation measure NOISE-1 restricting the use of mechanized equipment to between 7 A.M. and 4 P.M. Monday through Friday, the alternative would minimize the potential for short-term, periodic, but infrequent significant noise levels. The resulting noise impact would be less than, or superior to, the proposed project.

The discussion above demonstrates that this alternative would be environmentally superior to the proposed project by reducing impacts on biological resources, geologic resources, and sensitive noise receptors in the project area.

7.0 OTHER CEQA CONCERNS

7.1 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

CEQA section 15126.2 (d) requires that an EIR address how the proposed project could foster economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. This includes those projects that would remove obstacles to population growth, such as expansion of public infrastructure or extension of public services capable of supporting development beyond the project boundaries. A project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if it would induce substantial growth or concentration of population, or if it would extend a sewer trunk line or major roadway.

The proposed project would result in vegetation clearance and maintenance throughout the Montecito area.

CEQA Guidelines identify two criteria for evaluating the potential impacts of growth inducement. A project will normally have a significant effect on the environment if it will:

- induce substantial growth or concentration of population; and
- extend a sewer trunk line with capacity to serve new development.

The proposed Plan does not contain elements that would characterize it as growth inducing. It would not result in any extension of sewer trunk lines or extend any roads, or construct new roads. Therefore, the project is not growth inducing from the standpoint of facilitating additional growth by providing infrastructure necessary for such growth.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE EFFECT

CEQA Section 15126 (b) requires that an EIR define those significant impacts that cannot be reduced to a less than significant level. The implications and reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, must be described.

The proposed project would not result in any significant, unavoidable impacts on any environmental resources.

7.3 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

CEQA Section 15126.2 (c) requires that an EIR address the proposed project's impacts that could result in significant irreversible environmental changes if the proposed project is implemented, including the use of non-renewable resources and irretrievable commitments of resources. The proposed Plan would entail periodic removal of dead and decadent vegetation. The removed vegetation would be replaced over time with vigorous new chaparral growth that would have higher amounts of moisture, and therefore be more resistant to wildfire temperatures. This vegetation management would not result in irreversible environmental changes, as the natural cycle of chaparral growth and subsequent aging would not be interrupted. The biological chaparral habitat value would not be irreversibly impaired.

Resources used in this activity would include gasoline to run the mechanized equipment such as chippers and saws, and fire retardants such as Phos-check. These materials based on petroleum products are non-renewable resources. The relatively small amount of energy spent in project implementation would be offset by the reduction in intensity of wildfires from vegetation management. Less extensive wildfires would reduce the amount of gasoline required to support fire suppression vehicles, as well as minimizing the amount of water (fresh or reclaimed) needed to fight the fire. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Plan would not result in any irretrievable significant environmental changes.

7.4 BENEFICIAL IMPACTS

Implementation of the proposed project would have the following beneficial effects:

- The proposed Plan would implement a wildland fuels modification program. This would be the most effective approach in helping maintain the priorities of the District.

- Removal of non-native species would enhance the biological value of riparian corridors and terrestrial habitat areas.

- Plan implementation would reduce the potential for intense wild fires and property damage. This preventative action would potentially reduce the amount of water required in future fire fighting activities.

- The removal of dead and decadent vegetation would reduce the potential intensity of wildland fires and property damage. The effect on fire protection service would be beneficial.

8.0 REFERENCES

8.1 REPORT PREPARATION

Science Applications International Corporation

David Stone, Project Manager/Principal Archaeologist

Tom Mulroy, Principal Biologist

Theresa Stevens, Biological Resources

Perry Russell, Geological Processes

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Claudia Leufkens, Document Processing

Montecito Fire Protection District

Ron McClain, Fire Chief

Jim Langehorne, Captain

Curtis Vincent, Wildfire Specialist

8.2 LIST OF PERSONS CONTACTED

Vijaya Jammalamadaka, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

Ron Tan, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District

8.3 REFERENCES

FIREWISE 2000, Inc. 1998. *Montecito Community Fire Protection Feasibility Study.* Prepared for the Montecito Fire Protection District.

Grant, Campbell. 1978. Eastern Coastal Chumash. *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8, California.* Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department. 1999. Standard Conditions of Approval and Standard Mitigation Measures. April.

Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department. 1995. County of Santa Barbara Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual. January.

Santa Barbara County. 1992. *Final Environmental Impact Report, Montecito Community Plan Update, 92-EIR-13.* Prepared by Envicom Corporation for the Resource Management Department.

Appendix A
Public Comments and Responses

STATE OF CALIFORNIA-THE RESOURCES AGENCY GRAY DAVIS, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
South Coast Region
4949 Viewridge Avenue
San Diego, California 92123
(858) 467-4201
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Flex your POWER

November 26, 2001

Curtis Vincent
Montecito Fire Protection District
595 San Ysidro Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan SCH # 2000121029, Santa Barbara County

Dear Mr. Vincent,

The Department of Fish and Game (Department), has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for impacts to biological resources. The Montecito Fire Protection District (MFPD) plans to reduce fuel loads and flammability in heavily vegetated areas within the MFPD by removing and selectively eliminating dead and decadent vegetation in a mosaic manner. This maintenance program also would include the construction of fuel breaks and fire lanes at select locations within the MFPD. All work would be done by hand and would include pruning, limbing, and the application of fire retardant chemicals. Limbed and pruned vegetation would be left in place, chipped, or burned in piles. No burning would occur within the riparian drainages identified for treatment. The fire retardant chemicals would be biodegradable, non-corrosive, non-toxic, and not used on the banks of streams, rivers, or ponds. No trees would be removed.

The following statements and comments have been prepared pursuant to the Department's authority as Trustee Agency with jurisdiction over natural resources affected by the project (CEQA Guidelines §15386):

Project Impacts

In the discussion of project impacts in the Biological Resources section of the DEIR, there appear to be some inconsistencies with the Project Description section. We request that the following discrepancies be corrected or clarified. A-1

1. Impact BIO-3 - This is described on page 4.1-11 of the DEIR as the removal of vegetation beneath the riparian canopy. Table 2-3, found on page 2-16, describes

project activities taking place at least 50 feet from riparian watercourses. The riparian canopy would ordinarily include areas within this 50-foot setback. The Department recommends and supports the 50-foot setback aspect of the project. Please clarify the zone that is included in the riparian canopy described in Impact BIO-3. A-1

2. Impact BIO-6 - This is described as the removal of some types of non-native vegetation, including Eucalyptus. However, on page 2-2, it is stated "No trees would be removed or cut down as part of the maintenance plan." Please clarify this apparent discrepancy. A-2 Any Eucalyptus trees should be evaluated for their potential to support wintering Monarch butterfly populations. A-3 Tree removal should also occur outside of the bird nesting season. A-4 Even non-native trees, especially Eucalyptus, can provide nesting habitat especially for raptor species. Many ~~parker~~ raptor species begin nesting in February. If tree trimming or removal is occur from February through August. A precut nest survey should be completed no longer than 3 days prior to the removal date by a qualified ornithologist.

3. Mitgation measure BIO-2 discusses the avoidance of project activities during the bird breeding and nesting season (incorrectly given as April 1 to July 31). A-5 This avoidance measure was restricted to key habitat areas known to support sensitive nesting bird species. A-6 However, all migratory nongame native bird species are protected by international treaty under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (50 C.F.R. Section 10.13). Sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibit take of birds and their active nests, including raptors and other migratory nongame birds as listed under the MBTA. The Department therefore recommends **all** project activities take place outside of the breeding bird season (including disturbances which would cause abandonment of active nests containing eggs and/or young). A-7 The Department recognized bird breeding season is March 1-August 15.(February 1 for Raptors) If project activities cannot avoid the breeding bird season, active nests should be avoided and provided with a minimum buffer as determined by a biological monitor (the Department recommends a minimum 500 foot buffer for all active raptor nests). A-8

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Questions regarding this letter and further coordination on these issues should be directed to Mr. Martin Potter, Wildlife Biologist, at (805) 640-3677.

Sincerely,

Ms. Morgan Wehtje
Environmental Scientist IV

cc: Mr. Martin Potter
Department of Fish and Game
Ojai, California

Mr. Scott Morgan
State Clearinghouse
Sacramento, California

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Governor's Office of Planning and Research

State Clearinghouse

Gray Davis
GOVERNOR

Steve Nissen
DIRECTOR

November 29, 2001

Curtis Vincent
Montecito Fire Protection District
595 San Ysidro Road
unicorporated city,Santa Barbara, CA 93108

Subject: Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan
SCH#: 2000121029

Dear Curtis Vincent:

The State Clearinghouse submitted the above named Draft EIR to selected state agencies for review. The review period closed on November 26, 2001, and no state agencies submitted comments by that date. This letter acknowledges that you have complied with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Please call the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions regarding the environmental review process. If you have a question about the above-named project, please refer to the ten-digit State Clearinghouse number when contacting this office.

Sincerely,

Terry Roberts

Terry Roberts
Senior Planner, State Clearinghouse

Document Details Report
State Clearinghouse Data Base

SCH# 2000121029
Project Title Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan
Lead Agency Montecito Fire Protection District

Type **EIR** Draft EIR

Description The MFPD is developing the Montecito Community Fire Protection Plan to reduce fuel loads and flammability in heavily vegetated areas by removing and selectively eliminating dead and decated vegetation over a five-year period. This will serve to reduce the amount of dead and decated vegetative fuels in selected fire hazard zones, including hazard reduction zones along roadsides. When clearing is not feasible, vegetation would be modified to effect more favorable fire behavior conditions. The Draft EIR was prepared to assess the Plan's potential for impacting environmental resources such as biological resources, visual resources and archaeological resources.

Lead Agency Contact

Name Curtis Vincent
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Project Location

County Santa Barbara
City
Region
Cross Streets San Ysidro Road/Camino Viejo Road
Parcel No.
Township **Range** **Section** **Base**

Proximity to:

Highways 101, 192
Airports
Railways Union Pacific
Waterways San Ysidro Creek
Schools Montecito Union School and Cold Springs School
Land Use

Project Issues Aesthetic/Visual; Air Quality; Archaeologic-Historic; Forest Land/Fire Hazard; Geologic/Seismic; Noise; Public Services; Recreation/Parks; Traffic/Circulation; Vegetation; Water Quality; Water Supply; Wildlife; Cumulative Effects

Reviewing Agencies Resources Agency; California Coastal Commission; Department of Fish and Game, Region 5; Office of Historic Preservation; Department of Parks and Recreation; Office of Emergency Services; California Highway Patrol; Caltrans, District 5; Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3; Native American Heritage Commission; Public Utilities Commission; State Lands Commission; Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Date Received 10/12/2001 **Start of Review** 10/12/2001 **End of Review** 11/26/2001

Note: Blanks in data fields result from insufficient information provided by lead agency.

APPENDIX A

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

Morgan Wehtje, California Department of Fish and Game, November 26, 2001

A-1 The comment correctly interprets the component of the proposed project that would preclude vegetation management within 50 feet from the riparian watercourse. This would still allow fuel treatment in riparian habitats that extend greater than 50 feet from the watercourse top of bank. Impact BIO-3 addresses those instances where fuel treatment activities could occur in riparian habitat that extends greater than 50 feet from the watercourse top of bank. The text of BIO-3 has been revised to clarify the avoidance of vegetation removal activity with 50 feet of the riparian watercourse top of bank, to address this comment. Mitigation Measure BIO-10 would address this potential adverse effect on the habitat.

A-2 The comment correctly interprets the component of the proposed project that would preclude removal of trees as part of the maintenance plan. The plan would allow for the removal of dead and decadent tree limbs and pruning out of dead ladder fuels.

A-3 Impact BIO-6 has been revised to clarify that dead or decadent eucalyptus tree limbs could be removed under the proposed plan, and that this could possibly degrade Monarch butterfly habitat. Mitigation Measures BIO-14 and BIO-15 would reduce this potential habitat degradation impact related to less than significant.

A-4 Section 4.1.1.4, Sensitive Species, explains that raptor nests and roosts are protected by the California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5, and describes the observation of these species within the project area. Impact BIO-1 addresses the potential impacts of proposed vegetation removal on migratory and resident bird roosting habitat. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 requires that a pre-project survey by a qualified biologist determine that sensitive species are not nesting in a tree that is subject to vegetation removal activity. The timing of the survey has been revised to be undertaken 3 days prior to for any vegetation removal done between February 1 through August 15.

A-5 Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been revised to include avoidance of all nesting bird species and the nesting dates have been revised with the information provided in comment A-7.

A-6 Section 4.1.1.4, Sensitive Species, explains that all migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

A-7 Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been revised to include avoidance of all nesting bird species between February 1 through August 15.

A-8 Mitigation Measure BIO-2 has been revised to include the use of buffer zones as determined by a biological monitor if activities occur during the breeding season within key breeding areas. The buffer area specifies a 500-foot buffer for any observed active raptor nest within the project area.