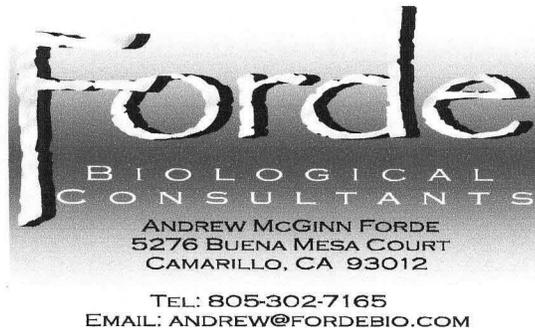

**Forde Biological Consultants, Burrowing Owl Survey, Vista Canyon
Ranch, Los Angeles County, California**

Burrowing Owl Survey

Vista Canyon Ranch, Los Angeles County, California

Prepared by:



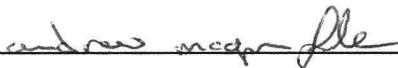
Prepared for:

Vista Canyon Ranch L.L.C.
27441 Tourney Road, Suite 260
Valencia, CA 91355

August 28, 2006

(Revised April 19, 2008)

This report is a true and accurate statement regarding the results of the burrowing owl survey conducted at the property commonly known as Vista Canyon Ranch, Los Angeles County, California. The survey described in this report is in accordance with the California Burrowing Owl Consortium's *Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines*.



Signature



Date

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Exhibit A: Location Map

Introduction

Rincon Consultants prepared a biological resource assessment, dated December 12, 2005, for the property commonly known as Vista Canyon Ranch in Los Angeles County, California. The assessment concludes the presence of habitat suitable for burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*).¹ Vista Canyon Ranch is located immediately south of Highway 14 and north of the Southern Pacific Railroad between Woodfall Road and the east terminus of Lost Canyon Road at an elevation of approximately 1500 feet. Exhibit A depicts the location of the property.

The California Burrowing Owl Consortium developed “*Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines*,” to assess the affects of development on burrowing owls. Under the guidelines, the first step of the process is to assess the presence of suitable habitat on and 500 feet beyond the property. If suitable habitat occurs, the guidelines recommend a burrow survey. If suitable burrows occur, the guidelines recommend a complete survey consisting of four site visits. Burrowing owl habitat includes annual and perennial grasslands, deserts, and scrublands characterized by low-growing vegetation. Suitable habitat may also include trees and shrubs, if the canopy cover is less than 30 percent of the ground surface. Burrows are the essential component of suitable habitat: both natural and artificial burrows provide protection, shelter, and nest sites.² In southern California, burrowing owls typically use ground squirrel and badger burrows. They are also known to use man-made structures, such as cement culverts; cement, asphalt, or wood debris piles; or openings beneath cement or asphalt pavement.

The guidelines recommend that surveys are conducted two hours before sunset to one hour after sunset or one hour before sunrise to two hours after sunrise, using transects no more than 100 feet apart. The burrowing owl nesting season begins as early as February 1 and continues through August 31. If possible, surveys should be conducted during the peak of the breeding season, which is between April 15 and July 15. If burrowing owls are not detected during the breeding season survey, the guidelines recommends

¹ *Draft Biological Resources Assessment, Rincon Consultants, December 12, 2005*

² *Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines, California Burrowing Owl Consortium, April 1993*

winter surveys be conducted between December 1 and January 31, during the period when wintering owls are most likely to be present. Based on the occurrence of suitable habitat, the presence of ground squirrel burrows, culverts, and debris piles, I considered it prudent to conduct a complete survey in accordance with the above referenced guidelines.

Methodology

I conducted the burrow assessment on July 14, 2006 using transects spaced approximately 20 feet apart. After I identified suitable burrows, I proceeded with the breeding season survey. The breeding season surveys was conducted on July 14, July 17, August 1, and August 8, 2006 beginning one hour before sunrise and ending two hours after sunrise. I conducted a winter survey on December 29, 2007, February 25, and February 28, 2008 and Ron Francis conducted surveys on January 8, January 18, January 28, February 8, February 18, February 25, and March 6, 2008.

Results

When I first visited the property, tall, dense field mustard dominated the majority of the non-native grassland described by Rincon Consultants. The structure of the field mustard and lack of openings rendered the majority of the non-native grassland, in the central portion of the property, unsuitable for burrow selection; burrowing owls typically select burrows in areas characterized by low-growing vegetation. I excluded this area from the breeding season survey. During an on-site meeting with the California Department of Fish and Game on December 20, 2007, I observed that the structure of the non-native grassland, in the central portion of the property had changed, rendering it suitable for burrow selection by burrowing owl. Ron Francis and I included the previously excluded grassland area in the winter surveys.

The California Burrowing Owl Consortium considers a site occupied if burrows are being used or have been used within the last three years. FBC did not observe any burrowing owls or any other evidence

suggesting their use of the property during the breeding season or winter survey and found no records indicating previous occupancy or use of it on the California Department of Fish and Games' *California Natural Diversity Database*.³

In addition to the above referenced dates, FBC and its associates visited Vista Canyon Ranch numerous other times between December 2005 and April 2008; albeit, to conduct other types of surveys. To date, we have not observed or detected burrowing owls or any evidence suggesting their use of the property. Although, no burrowing owls have been detected, there is potential for them to occupy the property between now and its development. FBC recommends a pre-construction survey be conducted approximately 4 weeks before construction activities are scheduled to occur and another 4 days before construction activities are scheduled to occur. If burrowing owls are determined present, the applicant or the applicants designated representative will contact the CDFG and request guidance and implement appropriate action before proceeding with construction activities.

³ California Department of Fish & Game, Wildlife & Habitat Data Analysis Branch, *California Natural Diversity Database*, 2006

Exhibit A

Forde Biological Consultants

