

BOWLAND & ASSOCIATES
PMB-205
Biological & Environmental Consulting Services
2674 East Main Street, Suite D
Ventura, CA 93003-2830
805-652-0577 fax 652-0576

Ms. Theresa Lubin
General Services Agency
Parks Department
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
PC 71300000130

September 15, 1999

RE: Biological Resource Assessment of Three Restoration Sites, Soule & Foster Parks

Dear Theresa;

This letter report contains the findings of my field survey of the two creek bank restoration locations at Soule Park and the one restoration site at Foster Park. I conducted field surveys of these three locations on August 5, 1999. The following sections describe the existing conditions within the area proposed for restoration at each specific site.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

FLORA

1. Soule Park

Two restoration areas occur within Soule Park; one is located on Thatcher Creek and the second is found along San Antonio Creek. Both sites are characterized by nearly vertical banks with little to no vegetation on the sheer bank faces. Dense vegetation, both native and non-native, occurs along the toe of the slopes at both sites, including strong natural regrowth of native arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*). Non-native, invasive species are common at the toe of the bank as well as within the channel immediately adjacent to the restoration areas. These species typically include horseweed (*Conyza spp.*), rabbits foot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*), and Himalaya blackberry (*Rubus discolor*). No water was present within either of these restoration sites during the field survey.

At the Thatcher Creek site, the top of bank area immediately adjacent to the restoration area is vegetated primarily with weedy non-native species, including black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), wild oat (*Avena spp.*), bromes (*Bromus spp.*), and smilo grass (*Oryzopsis miliacea*). To the west and east of the restoration zone, an open to closed-canopy oak - sycamore woodland occurs, comprised of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) along with other native plants, such as creeping wild rye (*Leymus triticoides*) and a

Theresa Lubin
September 15, 1999
Page 2 of 5

few Mexican elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*).

The San Antonio Creek restoration site is bordered along the top of bank by the irrigated lawn and planted landscaping of Soule Park. Non-native trees such as ash (*Fraxinus sp.*) occur along with native coast live oak and one large Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*). Other native shrubs are present, including sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*); these may have been planted. Irrigation of the lawn that borders this area is reaching over the top of bank, and may be causing sloughing of soils into the creek.

2. Foster Park

The Foster Park restoration site is located along the Ventura River. The site has steep, nearly unvegetated banks with dense growth of native and non-native plants along the toe of the slope. These plants include willow (*Salix sp.*), alder (*Alnus sp.*), and sycamore saplings, along with mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), cattail (*Typha sp.*), and streamside monkey flower (*Mimulus guttatus*). One large sycamore has fallen into the creek, and is resprouting at its base. Water was present within the restoration area during the field survey, including standing water within a ponded area in the northern portion of the site, and flowing waters in the southern area.

Highly invasive non-native species are beginning to establish themselves in the vicinity of the restoration area: giant reed (*Arundo donax*), dallis grass (*Paspalum sp.*), and Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*). The worst of these is the giant reed, which grows extremely fast and can take over large areas quickly.

FAUNA

The specific locations of each of these three restoration sites provide low habitat value for wildlife because of the lack of vegetative cover, and therefore habitat, along the sheer creek banks. However, moderate to high quality wildlife habitat is present immediately adjacent to each site.

At the two Soule Park sites, native riparian habitat is present within Thatcher and San Antonio Creeks, consisting of varying density and diversity of willow scrub and riparian woodland habitat. The top of bank area at Soule Park is adjacent to an active public park, and therefore would be expected to provide habitat for wildlife species tolerant of human and dog activities.

At Foster Park, the top of bank area is close to a paved parking lot and an unvegetated area containing large trees, both factors that reduce wildlife uses in these areas. Dense riparian vegetation is not present near the restoration site; such scrubby willow is found farther out in the streambed.

Theresa Lubin
September 15, 1999
Page 3 of 5

Oak woodlands are present in the vicinity of the Soule Park restoration sites. Oak woodlands provide important foraging and nesting habitat for a wide variety of birds. The oak woodlands in the project vicinity are generally inhabited by widespread species of birds like acorn woodpecker, Nuttall's woodpecker, Downey woodpecker, scrub jay, plain titmouse, bushtit, ruby-crowned kinglet, house wren, Hutton's vireo, orange-crowned warbler and dark-eyed junco. Raptors such as great-horned owl, red-tailed, red-shouldered and Cooper's hawks are drawn to oak woodlands for roosting and foraging. The moist characteristics of oak woodland understory provides suitable habitat for several species of amphibians and reptiles including black-bellied slender salamander, ensatina, arboreal salamander, Pacific tree frog, western fence lizard, western skink, southern alligator lizard, and ringneck snake.

The moist nature and protective cover provided by oak woodlands has attracted a fairly diverse mammal fauna. Some of the more common small mammals which use this habitat include broad-footed mole, Botta's pocket gopher, California mouse, dusky-footed woodrat, deer mouse, and brush mouse. Large oaks, both alive and dead trees, provide daytime roosting habitat for bats. Wide-ranging carnivores like coyote, gray fox, striped skunk, bobcat, black bear, and mountain lion are expected to forage in oak woodlands throughout the region. This habitat is also used extensively by mule deer for foraging and resting. Acorns provide an important seasonal food source for mule deer.

Riparian habitats are known to support the highest diversity and abundance of wildlife of any terrestrial habitat. This is due in part to the complex nature of this community which is created by the presence of fresh water, dense leaf litter, dense understory shrubs and thickets, and a variety of vertical habitats for nesting and foraging. These characteristics combine to provide high quality habitat to a wide variety of species representing the entire food chain, from algae and invertebrate fauna at the bottom to the top predators. Riparian habitats are critical to wildlife for because they provide: a permanent or seasonal source of water; a greater diversity of microhabitats for nesting and feeding due to their rich structural diversity; food, water, and protective and thermal cover important to mammals; and important movement and dispersion corridors. Riparian woodlands have declined throughout California during the past century and now only occur in a disjunct form along streams, rivers and in foothill canyons.

Riparian woodland habitats support many species of amphibians and reptiles. Some of the more common species include blackbelly slender salamander, Pacific treefrog, western toad, western fence lizard, western skink, southern alligator lizard, western aquatic garter snake and western rattlesnake.

Riparian woodlands support a diverse assemblage of resident and migrant land birds. Some of the characteristic nesting species in this habitat include black-chinned hummingbird, hairy, downy, and Nuttall's woodpecker, black phoebe, western wood pewee, western flycatcher, Hutton's vireo, common yellowthroat, black-headed grosbeak and song sparrow. Migrant

Theresa Lubin
September 15, 1999
Page 4 of 5

landbirds are numerous in this habitat; some of the more common winter visitors include ruby-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush, American robin, yellow-rumped warbler, and pine siskin.

Numerous species of mammals are expected to occur in riparian woodlands in the vicinity of the restoration sites. Some of the more common species of small mammals known to occur in this habitat include Trowbridge and ornate shrews, Botta's pocket gopher, California mouse, deer mouse, brush mouse, dusky-footed woodrat, and California vole. Riparian woodlands also provide excellent habitat for a number of large mammals such as brush rabbit, Virginia opossum, raccoon, long-ailed weasel, striped skunk, bobcat, mule deer, feral pig, and black bear. Mule deer frequent riparian habitats during the dry summer months for water and to escape the hot sun. They also use riparian corridors for protective cover and for dispersal/movement between lowland and highland foraging areas.

SENSITIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The term sensitive is used herein to describe all plant and wildlife species listed as rare, endangered, or threatened by the state and federal governments, species that are proposed or candidates for such listing, plants listed by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and species of local concern. Information regarding possible occurrences within the project vicinity was based on the presence of suitable habitat and known occurrences in the vicinity.

No sensitive species of plants were encountered within or adjacent to any of the three restoration sites. Southern California black walnut woodlands are considered to be a sensitive plant community due to wide-spread loss of this habitat; however, only individual walnut trees were found near these sites.

No sensitive species of wildlife were found, however, suitable habitat is present within or immediately adjacent to these sites. Sensitive birds that could occur in the vicinity and their sensitivity include sharp-shinned hawk, western yellow-billed cuckoo (nesting), rufous hummingbird (nesting), willow flycatcher (nesting), California horned lark, loggerhead shrike, grasshopper sparrow, yellow warbler (nesting), and yellow-breasted chat (nesting).

The coast horned lizard is a species of special concern that could utilize these areas, since native ants are available for their food and sandy substrate is their preferred habitat. Silvery legless lizard could occur on the site; suitable sandy soil habitat is present. This species is typically found near or in scrub and woodland habitats with dense leaf litter, often near water.

The Foster Park restoration area contains aquatic habitat within the Ventura River that could be utilized by steelhead trout and red-legged frog, both federally listed as threatened. Southwestern pond turtle, considered a sensitive species, could also be found in the Ventura River.



Theresa Lubin
 September 15, 1999
 Page 5 of 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

Restoration of these three sites should emphasize the use of native plants indigenous to the region. Suitable species are listed below:

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	Coyote bush
<i>Baccharis salicifolia</i>	Mulefat
<i>Encelia californica</i>	California sunflower
<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>	California buckwheat
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Toyon
<i>Leymus condensatus</i>	Wild rye
<i>Leymus triticoides</i>	Creeping wild rye
<i>Juglans californica</i>	So. Cal. black walnut
→ <i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i>	Sticky monkeyflower
<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>	Streamside monkeyflower
<i>Platanus racemosa</i>	Western sycamore
<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast live oak
<i>Rosa californica</i>	California wild rose
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	Wild blackberry
<i>Salix lasiolepis</i>	Arroyo willow
<i>Vitis girdiana</i>	Desert grape

Invasive, non-native plant species should be eradicated. Such plants include giant reed, Spanish broom, dallis grass, tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), and castor bean (*Ricinus communis*).

During construction at the Foster Park site, impacts to the aquatic resources of the Ventura River should be avoided. Cofferdams or other appropriate devices should be utilized to prevent sediment from entering the river.

Please contact me with any questions or comments on this report.

Sincerely yours,

Jacqueline L. Bowland
 Consulting Biologist